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THE INDEPENDENT

ON SATURDAY



Saturday 10 January 1998 70p (IR65p) No 3,504

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TOKEN COLLECT: TIME-OFF PAGE 17

Mo persuades the hard men to keep talking

In a dingy gymnasium inside the Maze prison, Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, outlined why she had met convicted loyalist terrorists: "Putting my case face-to-face, arguing it through with them, I thought was the best way of doing it so I'm here. No gun, no metaphorical gun, just a very constructive informed debate."

Within hours, her action was, in the eyes of most observers, triumphantly vindicated when the prisoners announced they had dropped their opposition to the talks process and were willing to give negotiations another chance.

Her dramatic action and its equally dramatic result mean that the Stormont multi-party talks will resume on Monday with much of the tension of recent weeks drained from the air.

It is now likely that all eight parties who left the talks before Christmas will be present.

Mo Mowlam's crucial meeting was with five members of the Ulster Defence Association, including Michael Stone, who is serving a battery of life sentences for six murders.

She also, almost in passing, met representatives of the

Maze's IRA prisoners, including a man serving life for the murder of two soldiers.

This was clearly a groundbreaking initiative which was last night viewed as a triumph for Mo Mowlam's determination to keep the process going, if necessary using the most unconventional and audacious means.

There were, however, some exceptions to the majority opinion that she had pulled off a spectacular political coup. Lord Alderdice, leader of the moderate Alliance Party, said: "Paramilitaries have hyped the whole situation up and the Sec-

retary of State has fallen into their web. Both she and they can claim a great victory, thoroughly ensconcing them as the important arbiters of our future, not democratic politicians. It has made threats of violence more likely in the future."

His concerns were echoed from the Conservative back-benches by Nicholas Winterton MP, who described the move as "one of the most diabolical instances of pandering to terrorism I can think of." Most of the critics, however, were silenced by the fact her approach brought such a speedy success.

Mo Mowlam gave the UDA prisoners a 14-point statement of government policy which she said contained no guarantees and no concessions to them. The key section on prison issues declared: "We have a responsibility to maintain community confidence in the criminal justice system and in the political process.

"We are prepared in the talks liaison sub-committee on confidence-building measures to discuss parties' concerns and to work on an account of what would happen in respect of prisoner releases in the context of a peaceful and lasting settlement being agreed.

"But let me be clear there will be no significant changes to release arrangements in any other context or for prisoners associated with a paramilitary organisation actively engaged in terrorist activity."

While this clearly contains no guarantees of any early release programme, the prisoners are believed to have been impressed both by her decision to speak directly to them and by the indication that prison issues now seem assured of a high place on the talks agenda.

Mo Mowlam said she had received messages from a number of people who had lost relatives in the troubles, adding that she apologised to those who had been offended by her initiative. Many others, she said, were supportive of the move.

Photograph, page 5



Keeping the faith: Children playing at Al Furqan Primary School in Sparkhill, Birmingham, yesterday. It is one of two Muslim schools that have become the first to be granted state funding. Full story, page 4

Photograph: Paul Rogers/News Team

TODAY'S NEWS

Phone inquiries to cost 40% more

British Telecom came under fire yesterday after announcing a 40 per cent rise in the cost of calling directory inquiries. At the same time, the former state-owned utility is considering a plan to return billions of pounds to its shareholders.

From next month, the charge for finding out a telephone number will go up by 10p to 35p. A telecoms users group said that the increase was totally unjustified and an extra charge for a service which users should be getting for free. Page 22

Pregnancy warning

Women using the contraceptive method Persona, a handheld device designed to monitor their fertility, are much more likely to become pregnant than women using the Pill. The Government warned yesterday that, over a year, one in 17 women who use the Persona system could become pregnant. Page 4

Sir Michael's works included the oratorio *A Child of Our Time*, *The Vision of St Augustine*, and *The Mask of Time*, and the operas *The Midsummer Marriage* and *Fingal's Cave*.

After the death of Benjamin Britten in 1976 Sir Michael was generally accepted as being the country's leading composer – though his radicalism and pacifism helped to ensure that the Establishment never clasped him to its breast. Obituaries, Page 20

Some 20ft long, it weighs around four tons and seems to sport at least six tentacle-like legs.

In the past, decaying objects that have fetched up on beaches have been identified as rotting whale blubber, which does dehydrate to form leather fibres like those visible this time. However, you don't usually get "legs" or "tentacles" in blubber. Page 15

Composer Tippett dies

Sir Michael Tippett, considered by some to be one of Britain's greatest composers since Elgar, has died at the age of 93.

Mystery blob on beach

A large, smelly and hairy lump of matter which has been washed up on a Tasmanian beach is continuing to perplex scientists.

Time Off, page 2

The Eye

Time Off

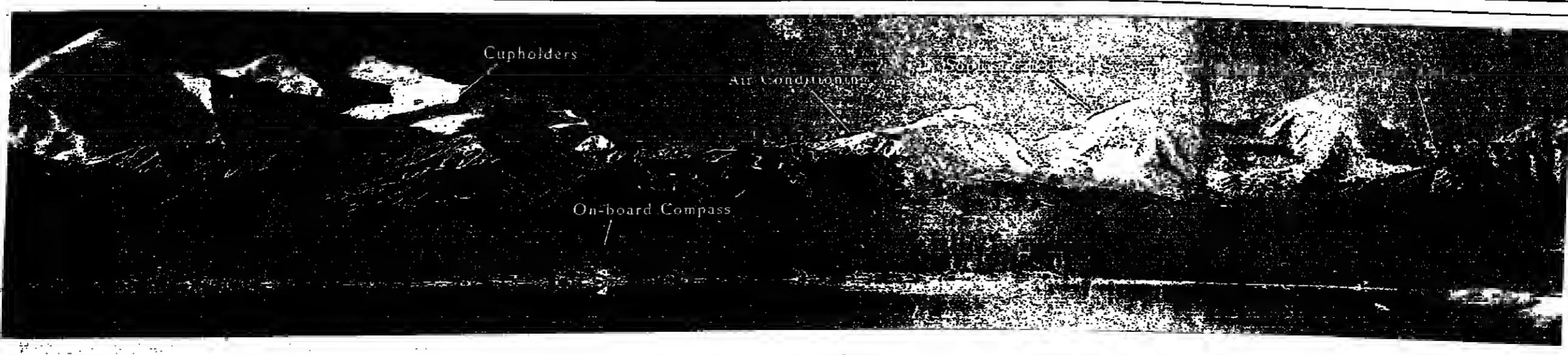
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COLUMN ONE

Millionairess is first lady of the theatre

Janet Holmes à Court, the Australian millionairess who owns 10 London theatres, and suffered a period of vilification when she first came to the West End, is now the most significant figure in British theatre. Each year *The Stage*, the weekly journal which is the bible of British theatre, assesses the major players on their achievements over the past 12 months.

Mrs Holmes à Court, 53, the widow of Australian businessman Robert Holmes à Court, runs the Stoll Moss West End theatre empire. When she first took over half a dozen years ago some theatre critics wrote vituperative pieces about her saying she would make the West End too commercial and eschew serious theatre. Instead, alongside refurbishing and redeveloping the theatres, she has staged challenging plays such as Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping And Fucking* and Ben Elton's *Popcorn* and supported new writers. "She backs new works when others shied away," claims *The Stage*. She has risen from sixth place last year in the top 100.

Last year's number one, Sir Cameron Mackintosh, has dropped to number two. He has two shows closing, *Martin Guerre* and *Oliver*. *The Stage* rates him "as successful as ever globally", but Mackintosh has had a quiet year in the UK.

Despite a mixed critical reception for the start of his artistic directorship at the National Theatre, Trevor Nunn is at number three "more in expectation of future success rather than current achievements". Far less vague are the reasons for the head of the West Yorkshire Playhouse Jude Kelly achieving the number four position. "Still the eminent force in regional theatre... her personal standing remains high in political circles and rocketing internationally." Ms Kelly has just directed *Othello* in Washington DC with Patrick Stewart playing a white *Othello*.

Another placing which owes more to likely future success rather than achievements during the last 12 months is Andrew Lloyd Webber at number five, down from number three last year. He had two musicals *Jesus Christ Superstar* close last year as well as a raft of redundancies at his Really Useful Group. But success is expected with his new show *Whistle Down The Wind*.

Among the theatre owners, directors and producers, the only actual performers in the top 20 are Judi Dench at number 12, Simon Russell Beale at number 15 and Maggie Smith at number 20. Dame Judi Dench is described as "still cited as the country's top actor by her peers on a regular basis". Simon Russell Beale, currently Iago in *Othello* at the National Theatre, is called "the greatest classical stage actor of his generation, still seen to best advantage on the boards despite recent television success". And Dame Maggie Smith is simply called "a stranger to failure". Harold Pinter is ousted from the top 20 after a quiet 1997.

Outside the top 100, the most significant figures are not numbered from 21 to 100, but the citations are notable for turning adulation with the odd barb. Actor-director Steven Berkoff is called "the master of his particular field, but will be ever harness his talents to those of his contemporaries?".

Of Alan Bennett, *The Stage* says: "Not much to speak of from Bennett recently, but he remains a key part of the regions' staple diet". Alan Bates is characterised as "never the household superstar he so often threatened to become, but still one of the most respected names within the industry".

Of the stranger citations, Deborah Warner wins a plaudit for being "more intellectual than your average director"; Tom Stoppard is lauded as "the intellectual powerhouse of the British theatre" which is followed by the caveat "if not to all tastes, as [his latest play] *The Invention Of Love* showed".

— David Lister, Arts News Editor

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

PEOPLE



Title role: Spanish ballerina Tamara Rojo, 23, at the Albert Hall, London, yesterday in advance of the production in June of *Romeo and Juliet* by the English National Ballet. Photograph: PA

Professor rebuked for homeless jibe

A Cambridge University professor came under fire yesterday after listing one of his recreations as "daily avoidance of assorted professional beggars, alcoholics and deranged individuals in the streets of Cambridge".

Professor George Salmon's unusual pastime appeared in the 1998 edition of *Who's Who* alongside his other hobbies, which included: driving sports cars, good wine, man whisky and comedy.

The head of a homeless charity in Cambridge said she was "horrified" that such a senior and learned academic could make such a comment and "very surprised" *Who's Who* had allowed it to be published.

The professor of molecular and microbiology who has also worked at Strathclyde, Edinburgh, Warwick and Kent, was unavailable for comment.

A spokeswoman for *Who's Who* said the entry had been written by Professor Salmon and editors had thought it suitable for publication. A spokeswoman

for Cambridge University "could not comment".

Ruth Wyner, director of the charity Winter Comfort, said the comment would do nothing to help those working to improve the plight of the homeless. "I am absolutely horrified. I cannot believe *Who's Who* can print things like that," she said. "It is really ghastly. It does not sound like the comment of an intelligent person."

She added: "We get people from all sorts of backgrounds who find themselves on the streets, including students. I hope none of Professor Salmon's family ever find themselves on the streets."

Police said there were problems with aggressive beggars last year.

Chief Superintendent Keith Hoddy, the officer in charge of Cambridge and its outlying areas, said: "There has been a problem in the past but I would say it is less than it has been now."

Raped Austrian tourist to marry police counsellor

The Austrian tourist gang-raped by eight youths has fallen in love with the police officer who counselled her after the attack.

Alexandra Sablatnig, 33, met Constable Ted Grimwood, 56, after suffering a "45-minute rape" and being thrown into a canal and left to drown by a teenage gang in September 1996. Their relationship began shortly after Ms Sablatnig's rapists were sentenced at the Old Bailey in London last April to a total of 89 years.

German-speaking PC Grimwood, who is separated but not divorced, flew to Vienna last May when the couple realised that they missed each other's company. Ms Sablatnig moved into the

police officer's home in Perivale, West London, in September with her two children and yesterday announced their plans to marry.

Ms Sablatnig, who waived her legal right to anonymity, said: "I known some people will think what has happened between Ted and me is unusual and others might think I am using him as some sort of support system. I am not.

I love him for him, and believe we would have fallen in love had I been a shop worker and he a taxi driver. Ted does not remind me of the rape at all, neither does England."

PC Grimwood still works as a rape counselling specialist at Islington police station, near the canal in King's Cross, north Lon-

don, where the attack took place, but is said to be considering resigning from the force.

A spokeswoman for Scotland Yard said yesterday: "It is a personal matter for the officer concerned: if it is found he hasn't done anything during the investigation which warrants disciplinary action then we won't get involved."

Ms Sablatnig's marriage to Mario, 34, a train driver, broke up when he blamed her for the attack, asking why she did not return to London so she could be raped again. He said: "Now she is in a stable relationship it has helped us to become better friends... The attack tore us apart."

— Rosa Prince

Branson's Lottery libel case takes off

Instead of preparing for his latest attempt to fly around the world in a balloon, Richard Branson will be spending part of next week in the witness box at Court 13 in the High Court, in his long-awaited libel case against Lottery boss Guy Snowden.

The courtroom clash, which opens on Monday, is the culmination of the Virgin boss's unsuccessful attempt to win the franchise for the British lottery. Mr Branson later publicly accused Mr Snowden of being a US firm GTECH which has a stake in successful bidders Camelot, of offering to bribe him to pull out of the race.

GTECH and Mr Snowden denied the claim, made on television, and Mr Branson then sued for libel claiming he was accused of being a liar. Mr Snowden in turn sued over the bribery claim. For some observers, the fact that Mr Snowden has not sued the television programme where the bribery allegations were made — *Panorama* — suggests that the affair is personal; it seems certain that neither man will be spared personal attacks

during the bitterly-contested action before Mr Justice Morland.

Much of the case will centre on the exact interpretation of words Mr Branson claims his lottery rival Mr Snowden used over lunch at the former's home in Holland Park, London, in September 1993.

Mr Branson alleges that Mr Snowden, an anglophilic American, said to him: "In what way can I help you, Richard? I'm sure everybody needs something," which he says was the offer of a kickback.

The two contrary libel suits are being "consolidated" into one action, with Mr Branson the plaintiff, and Mr Snowden the defendant. Both have big-hitting barristers, George Carman QC for Mr Branson and Richard Ferguson QC for his opponent.

After giving evidence next week, Mr Branson will concentrate on his next balloon voyage. If the winds are right there is the intriguing prospect of the case ending with Mr Branson giving his reaction from 30,000 feet.

— Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent

Getty lawyer to head C4

The lawyer of the arts benefactor and millionaire John Paul Getty II has been appointed chairman of Channel 4. Vanni Treves, a partner in the City firm Macfarlanes, is also the lawyer for Richard Branson's family trusts.

Mr Treves succeeds Sir Michael Bishop, chairman of British Midland airlines and friend of John Major. His Tory connections helped him off the threat of privatisation of the channel.

Mr Treves beat off competition for the job from Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of EMI, and Howard Dyer, non-executive chairman of Hamleys.

Mr Treves has the combination of business experience and arts background that the channel needs. He is on the council of the National Arts Collections Fund and is chairman of the development board of the National Gallery. The main business challenge of the year at Channel 4 will be its launch of a digital film channel dedicated to arthouse films.

— Paul McCann

Nikki Sand in love split

Nikki Sand, the television weather girl whose first song "Good Girl Going" was released this month, is to break up with her long-time partner, Noel Hutton, she announced last night.

The on-off relationship with the footballer had been "something I have outgrown as a person", Ms Sand said in a statement issued by her solicitors. "Despite our past difficulties and Noel's lifestyle, he remains a firm friend and a sweet person." She had no other relationship and intended to devote herself to her new career. Hutton was reported to have punched a reporter who approached him about the split.

ZITS



by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.41	Italy (lira)	2,806
Austria (schillings)	19.96	Japan (yen)	208.44
Belgium (francs)	58.69	Malta (lira)	0.61
Canada (\$)	2.22	Netherlands (guilder)	3.19
Cyprus (pounds)	0.83	Norway (krone)	11.74
Denmark (kroner)	10.89	Portugal (escudos)	289.09
France (francs)	9.51	Spain (pesetas)	240.39
Germany (marks)	2.84	Sweden (kroner)	12.57
Greece (drachme)	452.74	Switzerland (francs)	2.31
Hong Kong (\$)	12.07	Turkey (lira)	329.622
Ireland (pounds)	1.13	USA (\$)	1.56

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

UPDATE

HEALTH

Gums link to heart disease

People with diseased gums may be more prone to heart disease — and not just because poor gums indicate a poor diet. A study published in the *British Dental Journal* suggests that there may be a direct causal link between gum disease and heart disease.

Evidence of the link appears to be strongest in men aged 40 to 50 and could put poor oral health as a significant risk factor alongside smoking and a fatty diet.

The most likely explanation for the link is that bacteria produced as a result of gum disease have an effect on clotting mechanisms in the blood which increase the risk of heart disease. The authors suggest that some people have an over-reactive natural body defence system which makes them more sensitive to the effects of the bacteria. However, they stress that the jury is still out although "the pile of circumstantial evidence is mounting".

— Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor



CRIME

Licence-evaders' festive excuses

More than 10,000 television licence-evaders were caught in a two-week Christmas blitz, TV Licensing said yesterday.

Inquiry officers who worked over the festive period were kept amused by some of the excuses given by people caught without licences. One licence-dodger claimed she had asked Father Christmas for a television licence, but he hadn't delivered. Another officer visited a house one evening when the curtains were open and a television set was clearly visible. The occupier strongly denied owning a set, saying the officer has mistaken his Christmas tree light for a television.

Another householder claimed his set was not in use but the enquiry officer noticed it was still warm. He explained his wife had set the turkey there to "rest" before serving.

In all, 10,021 licence evaders were caught in the fortnight's crackdown.

TV Licensing warned there would be further New Year blitzes across the country. Anyone caught without a licence risks a fine of up to £1,000.

Mick Hill, director of TV Licensing, said: "We are delighted with the success of our Christmas campaign. However, we would prefer not to have to take anyone to court, and with so many easy ways to pay for a TV licence, such as monthly payments by direct debit, there should really be no need."

MOTORING

Alarm over elderly drivers

A leading safety group yesterday called for a review of the driver licensing system after recent alarming cases of elderly motorists travelling in the wrong direction on motorways.

Doctors should check older drivers more carefully before signing them as fit to carry on motoring after the age of 70, said the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

A pensioner died a crash after driving the wrong way on the M11 in Essex on Thursday while an 87-year-old man survived after going 10 miles in the wrong direction on the M25 last week.

"The whole question of driver licensing needs to be addressed," RoSPA road safety adviser Dave Rogers said.

He said: "Doctors asked to provide medical evidence of a driver's ability to continue on the road when they reach 70 should be aware of the moral responsibility they have."

Mr Rogers said RoSPA advocated that regular health checks should be made on licence-holders which would ensure that those of advanced years were monitored more closely.

RoSPA is to debate the matter of licensing at a conference in Blackpool in March which is due to be opened by Roads Minister Baroness Hayman.

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IN MONDAY'S INDEPENDENT

**Deborah Ross in the
glossy world of Vogue's
Nicholas Coleridge**

FEATURES

**The Brit
awards: Who
needs 'em?**

THE EYE

**The murder
capital of
Britain**

NEWS

**Rik Mayall, Barry
Manilow, Kevin
Costner and Blake's
Seven**

THE EYE

Meltdown makes Asia a paradise for tourists

The Asian economic crisis has sent prices plunging throughout the region. Beers can be had for as little as 20p, a Big Mac and fries for 35p, and a villa for £60 a night. Steven Vines samples the goods on offer.

The idea of a summer holiday in Bali must have seemed far too expensive for the average British tourist. No longer. The Indonesian currency has lost more than half its value against the pound in the past year, making Indonesia one of the bargain-basement destinations of the decade.

A villa with private swimming pool, big enough to accommodate a family, can be had for little more than £60 per night. While lounging by the pool you could be sipping an acceptable locally brewed beer for just 20p per bottle. In a bar the price rises to about 50p.

A reasonable European meal can be had in restaurants for around £4 a head, while an Indonesian meal with piles of satay, curries and vegetables would be about £2. If the children have a craving for a Big Mac and fries, a 35p price-tag will hardly prove an obstacle.

Then there is what to take home as gifts or trophies from the visit. For around £6.50 you can purchase a distinctively Indonesian ikat rug.

Most Indonesian hotels fix their prices in US dollars and so, in general, accommodation is not so much of a bargain as everything else. However, prices are hardly demanding. A new five-star hotel has just opened in the capital, Jakarta, and is offering rooms at just below £66 per night. Room rates are decent but less luxurious three-star hotels can be had for as little as £30.

Indonesia is not alone in offering outstanding bargains. The meltdown across the region has left few countries untouched. The most popular Asian tourist destination is Thailand, where the currency has halved in value over the past

year. Not only has it gone down but the whole country seems to be on sale. "The big shopping centres need the cash flow," says Wiwatchai Boonyapak, of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in Bangkok. Just before the new year TAT organised a "Thailand Grand Sale", which brought prices to new lows.

In Thai markets, shirts are going at £1.50 and silk blouses can be had for little more than £2. Even the best Thai clothing is half-price. Jim Thompson ties start at just over £6 and exquisite silk blouses from the same source cost just over £30.

Eating out in Thailand has never been expensive – but now it is ludicrously cheap. A meal in a first-class restaurant will only cost about £9 per head. At less fancy places where the food is still good, expect to pay around £4.

The real bargains are in hotel-room prices. It is now high season on the island of Phuket but rooms in four-star hotels cost no more than £25 a night. When the high season ends next month, rooms will be offered for about half this amount.

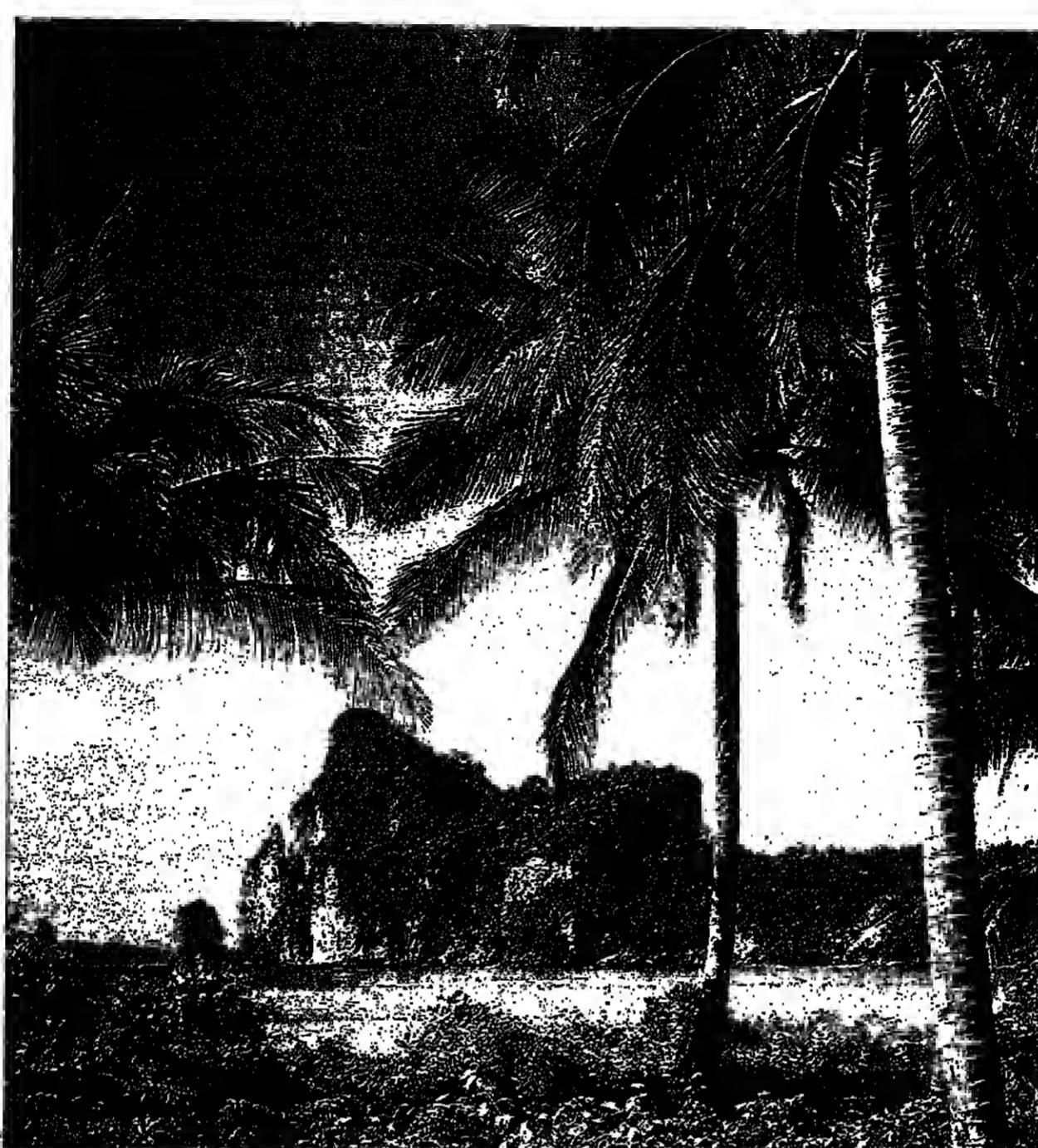
One of Thailand's biggest hotel chains, the Amari group, is offering rooms for the first night at around £25. The second night is free.

In Malaysia, where the currency has fallen in value by over 40 per cent, the bargain basement is not quite as full as elsewhere but there is plenty of good value. Most hotels are offering special rates at the moment, says Adlina Borhan, the tourism spokeswoman for the Hilton Hotel group in Malaysia. She gives the example of the Hilton Hotel in Sarawak, where room rates have gone down to about £30. "Hotels are trying to push companies to have meetings in Malaysia", she says. "It's definitely cheaper here".

A meal at one of Malaysia's eat-till-you-drop buffets cost no more than £4 per head in a restaurant. Washing down the buffet with a beer would set you back no more than 90p.

Malaysia just beats Thailand in the Big Mac price stakes, offering its version at under 50p.

It all makes Benidorm look a tad pricey.



A country on sale: Tourists have cashed in as Thailand's currency has halved in value in the past year. Photograph: R-PI

But political unrest could pose trouble

The Asian financial turmoil is great for holders of foreign currency but something more like a nightmare for most citizens of the countries whose currencies have been decimated. The downside for travellers could be political unrest. Steven Vines reports.

worried that food might disappear and that their money would become worthless.

If the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has its way, the government will be forced to cut the subsidies, primarily the fuel subsidy, which make the difference between millions of people living above or below the poverty line.

A stockbrokers' report issued in the capital Jakarta yesterday stated that 80 per cent of public companies would be bankrupt if foreign banks refuse to roll over loans due for repayment in the near future.

"There are no riots on the streets, but you can feel an atmosphere of tension," said a Jakarta resident. The tension has already boiled over in Bandung, a city with a large student population, where minor rioting was reported earlier in the week.

The usually meek local media has started openly to criticise President Suharto, whose authoritarian government has no ready-made means of transition to another form of rule. The President and his entourage, who are widely perceived as having

made fortunes during his period of office, will not disappear quietly into the night.

Meanwhile, in Thailand, the financial crisis has already brought down one government and brought in another headed by the generally well-regarded Chuan Leekpai. Because Mr Chuan has a reputation for honesty, expectations of his ability to put things right are high. Yet the local currency and stock market are caught in a relentlessly declining spiral, and companies are closing.

The new government has a lot of enemies, some of whom are in the military and have the ability to cause considerable disruption. In Malaysia, the Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, still has firm grip on government despite tensions within the ruling party and an undercurrent of criticism over his outspoken attacks on foreign investors which have fuelled the massive slump in Malaysian financial markets.

Holidaymakers in South-east Asia need have no immediate concerns about running into civil unrest, but they should be aware of the tension beneath the surface.

Lowest fares ever tempt travellers to the Far East

The collapse of the Asian currencies has had some positive aspects

– yesterday British

Airways tried to boost

business to China with

its lowest fare yet. And

Simon Calder, Travel Editor,

reveals that British

business travellers are

squandering a fortune by

buying tickets here

rather than abroad.

The fluctuations can also mean some flights become virtually free. A one-way London-New York Concorde fare costs £3,500; travelling from Jakarta to London in first class adds only £350 to the price. Of course, you need to get to the Far East in the first place. Discount agents were yesterday quoting one-way fares to Bangkok as low as £340 on Aeroflot via Moscow, or on Uzbekistan Airways via Tashkent.

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A fares war has also broken out across the Atlantic. Fares announced yesterday have returned to levels last known 20

It pays to fly from Asia

Fares quoted yesterday by British Airways for fully-flexible tickets travelling via London, inclusive of pre-payable taxes.

Club World in South America

London-Santiago £5,023

Bangkok-Santiago £1,714

(£5,023 with stop in London)

First Class to West Africa

London-Lagos £3,760

Seoul-Lagos £2,480

Concorde to New York

London-New York £3,500

Jakarta-New York £3,850

(subsonic First Concorde to London)

years ago, when Laker's Skyrain was in operation.

British Airways yesterday matched Virgin Atlantic's cuts, reducing return economy fares to Boston and New York to £189. One reason why fares have fallen so sharply since the start of the year is a new Advertising Standards Authority rule requiring advertised fares to include pre-payable taxes. BA is advertising Amsterdam for £79, saving £20 on its lowest fare before the rule came into effect.

As usual, travel agents are undercutting the official fares still more. The London discount specialist Flightbookers was yesterday offering flights from Gatwick to Boston or New York on a Continental Airlines/Virgin Atlantic codeshare flight for £170 return, for travel until the end of March. When the tax element is stripped out, the base fare collected by the airline is as low as £120 for 7,000 miles of air travel.

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FUJITSU

PM's wife to oppose unions on pensions in House of Lords

The case against hundreds of thousands of workers - mostly women - getting better pension rights is to be put to the House of Lords by a legal team in which Cherie Booth is a prominent figure. Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, looks at the implications.

The Prime Minister's wife is a senior member of a legal team resisting claims for enhanced pension rights for hundreds of thousands of Britain's lowest paid workers, most of whom are women. As a leading barrister, Cherie Booth would stand to earn a lump sum of around £25,000 plus £2,500 a day for court appearances, although her chambers last night refused to comment on her remuneration.

The critical hearing begins a week on Monday at the House of Lords which will decide whether part-time employees qualify for back payment of pensions bringing them into line with full-time colleagues. Leaders of the Unison public service

union yesterday declared their confidence that they would win and that it could cost the Government and the private sector more than £100m.

Apart from her identification with the Labour Party, Ms Booth's involvement is ironic because the additional rates being sought would mean that most of the workers would cease to qualify for social security benefits at a time when the Government is determined to reduce dependency on the state. Doubly ironic is the fact that the Government is one of the employers fighting alongside Ms Booth who is representing local authorities.

Ms Booth will argue that she is simply doing her job and that she is operating on the "car park" principle by which barristers simply take the first client that comes along. However, it is the first time that Ms Booth's career has been at odds with her husband's position.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, Unison general secretary, said he hoped the Government would accept the fairness of giving part-time workers full pension rights. "New Labour quite properly say

they are different and we believe that this is a matter of social justice," Mr Bickerstaffe said. "... If we win it will send a signal to women in particular that they are valued. I would hope that the Government would treat this realistically and that we don't have to fight a rearguard battle. We consider pensions to be deferred payments and we believe that part-timers have been robbed by the system."

In their fight to win equal rights for part-timers, unions have lost cases at an industrial tribunal and in the Court of Appeal. However, they believe that a new ruling from the European Court of Justice last month will mean that the law lords will give a decision in their favour.

The bill for extra pension payments will fall on the Government, local authorities and a number of private employers.

Unison believes that a typical example of a worker who would be affected by the ruling is a woman who worked half-time for her local authority. Her pay would have been around £6,000 a year and the extra entitlement would be £750 a year in pension payments and another £2,250 as a lump sum.



Fuel for thought: Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, emerging yesterday from Kellingley Colliery at Knottingley, West Yorkshire. He was visiting the RJB Mining pit to reaffirm the Government's support for the coal industry

Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

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Hague calls for inquiry into Welsh referendum vote

William Hague last night demanded an urgent, independent inquiry into the Welsh assembly referendum count.

Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, reports on the growing concern over irregularities.

a "startling and worrying picture of inconsistencies in the procedures for the counting of votes" in the count.

To particular, such an inquiry must consider the guidance issued to each council on how to determine valid votes cast and whether this guidance was at any stage altered; if the guidance was indeed altered, we need to know whether this was done, who authorised the changes to the guidance and why, and whether any returning officer was informed of the new guidance and applied it consistently; and the scale of any inconsistencies in determining valid votes cast.

The central confusion was over a double negative - whether the word "No", written against the ballot paper statement, "I do not agree that there should be a Welsh Assembly" should have invalidated the vote and created a spoilt ballot paper.

In some parts of Wales, such papers were counted as No votes, in others they were deemed spoilt - while the council in Neath-Port Talbot accepted only papers marked with an X.

Mr Hague said last night: "I believe it is now essential that we have an independent inquiry

to look into all the allegations of irregularities in the count.

To particular, such an inquiry must consider the guidance issued to each council on how to determine valid votes cast and whether this guidance was at any stage altered; if the guidance was indeed altered, we need to know whether this was done, who authorised the changes to the guidance and why, and whether any returning officer was informed of the new guidance and applied it consistently; and the scale of any inconsistencies in determining valid votes cast.

He said the people of Wales had a right to expect that the UK's high electoral standards would apply. "This week's revelations have cast doubt over whether this holds true for the Welsh referendum. It should... be a matter of urgency that the questions raised are addressed by an independent inquiry."

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Batt
Pillow fight: Landlord
Comfy coffee mega

An American bookseller chain is planning to bring its coffee and coffee shops to Britain. Last week reports on the opening of its first coffee shop in London.

It is the first time that a major coffee chain has opened in the UK. The chain, which has 1,000 outlets in the US, is expected to open its first UK branch in London next month.

The chain, which is owned by the American company Bookseller, has been in the UK for several years, but has only recently started to expand its coffee shop business. The chain's first UK branch is due to open in London next month.

Music chid
'dumbing'

Battle breaks out over dead poet's final resting place



Pillow fight: Landlord Tom Watts and his wife Meresa on Dylan Thomas' oak-framed bed

Photograph: Huw Evans

A piece of furniture that once belonged to Dylan Thomas is at the centre of a tale involving some of Britain's biggest celebrities. Andrew Buncombe follows the trail of the bed that everybody wants to sleep in.

Brown's Hotel in Laugharne is an imposing establishment with a facade of white painted stone, set on the main road from Carmarthen.

It is a popular place, and both locals and tourists visiting the South Wales town enjoy its unchanging atmosphere. But many visitors are unaware of a piece of furniture within the hotel which is causing – as they say in these parts – a bit of a fuss.

A 50-year-old bed is at the centre of a battle for ownership that involves a rock star, a poet's daughter and James Bond (or at least the actor who plays him).



Dylan Thomas: Still causing trouble

Like many things in Laugharne, the bed has connections with the town's most famous son, Dylan Thomas. Unlike many things in Laugharne, the connection between the bed and the poet are not in doubt: it is Thomas's bed, rescued

from the cottage where he lived before his death in New York in 1953. The bed is currently used by a long-term resident who lives in a flat in the hotel. But that could change.

Thomas Waits, the landlord, who has owned the bed for the past 26 years, recently received a "substantial offer" for it from the actor Pierce Brosnan. He said he believed Mick Jagger also wished to buy it.

Brosnan, a Dylan Thomas fanatic who named his son after the poet, visited the area last year while on a fishing trip. He stopped off at the hotel and made an offer for both the bed and a table at which the wayward genius used to sit with his equally wayward wife Caitlin, who died in 1994.

"I told Brosnan about the table and the bed and he made me an offer for both but I have not accepted," said Mr Watts, 66. "I understand that Mick Jagger is also very interested in them, but they are staying put for now."

Jagger's interest in Thomas is such that his film company,

Jagged Films, is soon to start work on a film about Dylan and Caitlin's relationship. Whether the singer actually intends to make an offer for the bed is less clear. A spokeswoman for Jagged Films said he did not plan to buy it.

The battle for the bed takes a further twist through the involvement of Thomas's daughter, Aeron Ellis.

"She came in here and said she wanted the bed back in the family," said Mr Watts, whose hotel is close to St Martin's church where Dylan and Caitlin are buried. Mr Watts said the bed was a gift from Caitlin for his help in selling Thomas's cottage, The Boat House, in the early Seventies.

"The cottage was cleared out and there were a few bits and pieces left, including the bed. Caitlin said I could either keep it or throw it out."

Mrs Ellis denies making any fuss. "I would like to own it as I don't have anything of my father's. But I can't compete against the likes of Pierce Brosnan."

Comfort and coffee in book megastores

An American bookshop chain is planning to bring its cosy mix of sofas, story-telling and coffee shops to Britain. Louise Jury reports on the browsing revolution that is transforming book buying.

American booksellers Borders will open a shop of 39,000sq ft with 150,000 titles in Oxford Street, central London, this summer to offer Britons the chance to choose their books in comfort.

The move, to be followed by a store in Leeds by the autumn, will confirm a trend that has made the coffee shop an integral part of the book-buying process in shops selling perhaps four times the number of titles of traditional rivals.

The superstore which Waterstone's opened in Glasgow last year incorporated a coffee shop and comfortable chairs to encourage readers to take their time over their purchases.

Books etc, the British chain bought by Borders for £40m a couple of months ago, already offers the option of a cup of coffee in several of its 22 shops.

A spokeswoman for Books etc and Borders said it was all about "lifestyle bookselling" – making the shop into a community base with more in it to interest the customer. The Borders chain also sells music and videos alongside paperbacks.

"In the past, people weren't encouraged to browse and read the books. But people want to take their time and make sure they have got the right book," the spokeswoman said.

"At the 180 Borders shops in the United States, regular cus-

tomers spend hours thumbing through the books without so much as a raised eyebrow from the staff. Special events include story-telling sessions for children and even Saturday evening pyjama parties for youngsters. It is still to be decided which of the US features will be transported into the British stores, which will operate alongside the Books etc chain under the Borders name.

A spokeswoman for Waterstone's said the reaction to the Glasgow store, which holds 150,000 titles, had been "fantastic". It had "amply exceeded" its sales targets and they were now looking for more superstore sites.

But Waterstone's had also recently opened its smallest shop – a 1,500sq ft site in the City of London. "There is not just an obsession with size," the spokeswoman said. "We want to listen to the audience and cater to it. In the City, they want to be in and out quickly."

Tim Rix, chairman of the National Book Committee, which brings together publishers, retailers and authors, said superstores were welcome if they encouraged more customers. "But the fear is that it might lead to a price war, which would eventually lead to the demise of the small independent bookseller, leaving smaller towns bereft."

But Brian Perman, director of the Book Trust which encourages reading, welcomed anything which encouraged people to buy more books.

"The revolution in bookselling has been the recognition that buying books is a pleasure pursuit like going to the cinema and requires bookshops to open when people are not working and where the ambience is really important," he said.

Music chief quits at 'dumbing down'

The director of one of Britain's largest series of outdoor music concerts has resigned in protest at the "dumbing down" of classical recitals.

Michael Webber, who has run the concerts held at English Heritage properties including Kenwood House, in north London, for 12 years, has left 16 months before the end of his contract. He criticised the move away from the standard symphonic concerto repertoire towards shorter pieces and snatches of classics that were less demanding for audiences.

The problem was not confined to English Heritage, who put on concerts from Northumberland to Cornwall, but was widespread, he said. "It is part of a much greater cultural trend which I find difficult to accept."

Mr Webber, 71, said he was sad that the music did not seem

to be the priority for many of the audience and that the picnicking, which is a feature of the evenings, had taken over.

He also questioned whether it was necessary to have fireworks at the end of every concert, although he accepted the commercial pressures for doing so. Fireworks add a couple of thousand to attendance figures.

However, English Heritage rejected charges of dumbing down. A spokeswoman said jazz and popular music had formed part of the programme for some years. Events this summer will include Cleo Laine and John Dankworth and an evening of Andrew Lloyd-Webber music.

"There's a popular demand. We acknowledge the concerts have to be a commercial success. They bring people into a property where they can enjoy music in beautiful surroundings."

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Radio

Chris Evans' style of broadcasting allows him to take in everything around him and use it as humour. But Paul 'McCarten' Media Correspondent, warns that the DJ is in danger of overstepping the mark.

The radio industry was taking a break during the Virgin Radio breakfast show, but the way it is by listeners doesn't seem to be the same. The programme's stations, including the Virgin Radio breakfast show, are regulated by the BBC. One of Chris Evans' stations, Virgin Radio, has already been fined with the rest of the industry.

According to the BBC, the stations are not allowed to show or broadcast any material that is not suitable for children under 16. The BBC has issued a warning to the stations, and they are expected to take action.

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Radio watchdog on guard as Evans talks up his sponsors

Chris Evans' style of broadcasting allows him to take in everything around him and use it as humour. But Paul McCann, Media Correspondent, warns that the DJ is in danger of overstepping the mark.

The radio industry's watchdog is investigating the Virgin Radio breakfast show after complaints by listeners about the way he talks about the programme's sponsors during his show.

The Radio Authority, which regulates commercial radio stations, has requested a tape of one of Chris Evans' shows and has already had discussions with the station about so-called "product placement" - where a broadcaster's mentions of a sponsor's products during a show cross the line between editorial and advertisement.

According to rule six of the authority's sponsorship code DJs are not permitted to endorse a sponsor's product or service within the editorial of a show. Instead sponsor's credits are usually at the beginning and end of shows or before traffic round-ups and weather reports. However there is a grey area where DJs can mention commercial products, including the sponsor of the show, as long as it is not seen as an explicit endorsement.

The listeners who have complained feel that Evans' use of a sponsor's name as part of an extended humorous "rap" with his team in the studio may be



breaking the RA's code. For instance, on Thursday morning Evans even declared on air that his sponsors got good value from him.

Earlier this week the company owned by Chris Evans which owns Virgin Radio, Ginger Media Group, signed a £3m sponsorship and programme development deal with the satellite broadcaster BSkyB.

Following this deal the DJ has started comparing BSkyB programmes with BBC ones. While the humorous implication of Evans' skits is that the BBC's programmes are dull compared to those of BSkyB, he has been careful not to explicitly recommend that listeners watch BSkyB. Instead he ends the skit by saying that listeners can decide for themselves what to watch. Virgin is known to believe that this protects the

DJ from accusations of endorsement.

In addition to the sponsorship deal the DJ is known to have become good friends with Elisabeth Murdoch, the daughter

of Rupert Murdoch, owner of BSkyB and programming director of the satellite channel.

The two have been seen and photographed out on the town together, including at a recep-

tion at Downing Street. The other main sponsor of the show is the Czech beer Pilsner Urquell.

Again, the breakfast show "zoo" - Evans' on-air radio team - boasted when one of

them said she had never drunk the beer and Evans said she had been told off for her lack of support.

"This is a matter that has been discussed and we will

monitor the station," says David Lloyd, the Radio Authority's head of programming and advertising. "The dangerous thing is if mentions of a product become endorsement by being

A word for our sponsors: Chris Evans with Holly Samos, a member of his radio team, who risk being rebuked for not supporting advertisers. Photograph: PA

gratuitous rather than of editorial merit."

The authority has already rejected one complaint from a listener and is investigating another. Mr Lloyd is that his style of broadcasting takes in everything happening to him and all that surrounds him: "Chris Evans is known for testing the boundaries. Given his track record we contacted Virgin to show them the rules".

John Pearson, Virgin Radio managing director, said: "It is our intention to stay within the guidelines. However, it is also our intention to be innovative and make it interactive with the programme."

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Chefs feel heat as mushrooms go on conservation menu

A move by wildlife conservation groups to limit mushroom picking has met with squeals of outrage from London chefs who say fungi are vital to their cooking. Rosa Prince looks at the ingredients for an environmental row.

Conservation groups including the National Trust and English Nature say over-picking is harming rare mushrooms and the woodland animals who live off them.

But London restaurateurs deny the use of mushrooms such as penny buns, slippery-jacks, horns of plenty, and giant puff balls is damaging.

Antonio Cartuccio owns the Neal Street Restaurant in Covent Garden which uses mushrooms in 30-40 per cent of its dishes. He said: "Mushroom picking has been going on all over the world for thousands of years.

"Up to 20 years ago English people associated mushrooms with black magic instead of something good to eat.

"It is only in the last few years that we have got into continental food and so into mushrooms.

"In other countries mushrooms are very much part of gourmet food and I don't see why we can't enjoy them here."

The chefs' call to keep one of their favourite ingredients on the menu comes as the National Trust joins with English Nature, the British Mycological Society, the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission to draw up a code of conduct for pickers.

They say restrictions are needed to stop commercial pickers who take large numbers of rare mushrooms for export abroad, and to curb over-zealous harvesting by individuals.

The problem is particularly bad in the New Forest, Hampshire, and in parts of Scotland where some forests

are said to have been stripped of mushrooms.

The National Trust itself has received donations from the sale of wild mushroom soup made by the New Covent Garden Soup Company, and still appears on its packaging. Company spokeswoman Katie Kama said: "When we offered to donate money they were concerned about where the mushrooms came from. We import from China and Eastern Europe so it was all right and we went ahead."

John Harvey, head of nature conservation at the Trust, said: "The basis of our concern is reports of commercial collection by companies who either export the mushrooms or sell them to London restaurants.

"People are going out with rakes and raking up the mushrooms which kills animals and other plants. The parallel is with deep-sea fishing which has decimated some species of fish."

Restaurateurs, too, are keen to stress their commitment to conservation. Rose Grey, of the River Café in Hammersmith, west London, said: "When we buy for the restaurant we go to commercial pickers who go on organised mushroom picks in places where there are plenty.

The River Café uses fungi in its risottos, ravioli and omelettes. When larger mushrooms are available they roast them stuffed with pancetta and thyme.

Dr Brian Johnson, a botanical adviser to English Nature, said the restrictions would not limit mushroom enthusiasts who picked a few for their evening meal. He said: "We have no intention of stopping the collection of mushrooms altogether. But taking large quantities in a way that is doing harm must be stopped. The guidelines would limit the amount people collect and ban certain damaging methods."

Dr Johnson said the code would be voluntary but if it was ignored, conservation groups would seek legislation or the licensing of commercial pickers.



Kitchen magic: The chanterelle mushroom (*Cantharellus cibarius*) – a much sought-after variety with a cap measuring 2-10 cms and a superb flavour with a distinctive smell of apricots

Photograph: Tessa Traeger

Britain a paradise for fungi eaters

The British Isles are a haven for mushrooms – almost all varieties grown worldwide can be found here. The season runs from mid-late summer through autumn, although some varieties continue outside this time. Wild mushrooms favoured by top restaurants include:



The giant puffball: Big as a football, can feed a family



Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) are plentiful in Scotland. They are a deep yellow and are said to smell of apricots. Chanterelle are found in mossy woods and are often cooked with scrambled eggs.



The horn of plenty (*Craterellus cornucopioides*) is an unusual blackish colour and tastes best with white fish such as halibut, sole or monkfish.

Giant puffballs (*Langermannia gigantea*) can be big as a football – just one can feed a whole family. May be sliced and deep fried or grilled.

The wood blewit (*Lepista nuda*) grows in abundance in Britain, but take care cooking it as it is poisonous when raw. They are in season well into the winter.

Murels (*Morchella elata* and *Morchella esculenta*) are very expensive and very rare. Must be distinguished from the false morel (*Gyromitra esculenta*) which is poisonous.

Slippery Jack (*Sulcus letus*) live under trees and have a slippery surface – hence the name. They are good in stews.

Slippery Jack: Good in stews

Photographs: George McCarthy

Blair
British
on Eu

Tony Blair wants to sweep the top ranks of the Eurocracy with Britons. But the hurdles in the way of new EU civil servants are high. Katherine Butler reports

British Eurocrats – 1,500 in all – were promised a better deal when they took over in 1993. But a new set of rules this week will end the perks and nesting in the top echelons and make bosses sign off on "fair Blair".

As Britain takes over the European Union presidency, Tony Blair wants to let you all in on the perks and administer an "equal Blair". The work will be harder and more difficult, but with our European partners, the UK will be a better place to live and work. The UK is a strong and stable democracy, and we are determined to work with our European partners to achieve the goals of the European Union.

The UK is a strong and stable democracy, and we are determined to work with our European partners to achieve the goals of the European Union.

TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



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Go there, do that – your essential guide to the great cities of the world

Decriminalise cannabis – the latest news in the campaign that everyone is talking about

Britain basks in warmest winter day for decades

After storm, flood and tornado, Britain experienced record-breaking warmth yesterday. The mildest January day for decades saw temperatures reach almost 15°C (59°F) at several recording stations as warm winds blew from the South-West.

England and Wales have already had most of the entire average rainfall for January, with little more than a quarter of the

month having passed. The river Severn and its tributary, the Wye, are threatening to burst their banks and thousands of homes in Gloucester have been placed on red alert. Local council workers have been issuing sandbags to homes in vulnerable areas.

At Sandhurst in Gloucestershire two men who became stranded used a mobile phone to call emergency services after tak-

ing refuge on the roof of their car. They were eventually spotted by the crew of a police helicopter using thermal imaging equipment, and were taken off by dinghy.

Meanwhile, the US government has confirmed the UK Meteorological Office's finding that 1997 was the world's warmest year since global records began a century ago.

— Nicholas Schoon

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Blair helps British take on Eurocracy

Tony Blair wants to swell the top ranks of the Eurocracy with Britons. But the hurdles in the way of new EU civil servants are high. Katherine Butler reports

British Eurocrats - 2,500 in all - were bemused to return to their Brussels and Luxembourg offices this week to find a letter nestled in their in-trays and E-mail boxes, signed simply "Tony Blair".

As Britain takes over the European Union presidency, the Prime Minister wrote: "I want to let you all know the respect and admiration which I have for the work which British citizens ... carry out within our European institutions ... I know too that during the British Presidency the work you do in the service of all Europe's citizens will contribute greatly towards achieving the goals we have set ourselves of a Europe working for the people."

The letter appeared designed to offer amends for almost 20 years during which British EU civil servants were almost too embarrassed to admit their nationality, as a hostile London government used every opportunity to block the Commission's projects and ridicule its ideas.

But coinciding with the launch of the British EU presidency and the Blair plan to "rebrand" Europe in new Labour's image, it also looks to some insiders as a slightly ominous rallying call. Those who have grown used to working independently of London in the service of "Europe", fear they are being asked to remember where their national loyalties lie.

"He is telling us we are all great, but reading between the lines he seems also to be saying 'don't forget you are British and

we are going to be in charge now,'" was the reaction of one high ranking British Eurocrat.

Indeed, a new government drive to groom a new generation of Britons capable of nabbing senior posts in the Eurocracy would seem to back up the theory that Blair sees a much stronger British presence at the top ranks of the EU institutions as one of the keys to his aim of getting Europe to follow Britain, rather than the other way around.

Competitions for top level vacancies in the European Commission, Parliament and Council of Ministers will be announced shortly. A clear strategy has been mapped out by a special unit within the Cabinet Office to counter the traditional unwillingness of Britons, compared to other nationalities, to consider a career in Europe.

The Blair initiative will be welcomed by many who regard a geographical balance, and a more representative civil service as essential to a democratic EU.

But while getting the "right"

people to apply is one thing, ensuring they clear the hurdles on the path to Eurocracy quite another.

One of the problems is the notorious French inspired "concours". This is a massive public competition - 50,000 competed in the last one in 1993 for 200 places. Candidates are brutally weeded out by a bizarre geographical knowledge quiz featuring such teasers as: which armies fought the battle of Aboukir? Or: when was nylon invented?

In one recent competition for a senior administrative post fewer than 1 per cent of British applicants got through, suggesting that too few people capable of giving continents a run for their money when it comes to European history or culture can be bothered to apply. Now the Government is offering potential candidates

detailed advice, reading lists and even targeted training to help them overcome the cultural and linguistic obstacles.

Competition is cut-throat for the 28,000 or so jobs in the EU's main institutions. EU hierarchy divides civil servants into grades from A (the most coveted senior administrative posts, where basic salary before

generous allowances are added can top £10,000 a year), down through the ranks to D grades, including ushers and doormen (basic salary around £25,000) who are almost exclusively Belgian and Italian.

While EU officials are supposed to serve "Europe" not their countries, an unofficial "quota" system operates to en-

sure a rough balance of nationalities, particularly in the policy-making Commission, by far the biggest employer. Jobs at the most senior level usually go to member state appointees or the personal advisers of Commissioners, rather than to foot-soldiers who have worked their way up.

The Government is hoping

to drum up interest in the lower and middle echelons of the A ranks, where it considers Britain to be still under-represented despite a near doubling from 4.7 per cent to around 10 per cent during the 1992 to 1994 period. These are the grades where the brightest graduates, or graduates with around five years' experience, are taken on.

Prospective candidates face a multi-choice pre-selection quiz which is being reformed to answer criticism of pro-French and anti-women bias (fewer questions on sport for example). Those who get through sit a gruelling written stage where they may be asked for an essay, for example, on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The final stage is a 45 minute oral exam which also tests foreign language skills.

Anyone tempted by the salary and the lure of a European lifestyle should put themselves on the Vacancy Information Service database which is operated by the European Staffing Unit, Cabinet Office, Horseguards Road, London SW1P 3AL.

TAKE THE TEST TO FIND OUT IF YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A EUROCRAT



Testing times: Does the Vatican state, above left, have the smallest surface area, and did Copenhagen, right, belong to the empire of Charles V?



Photographs: Reuters/MSI

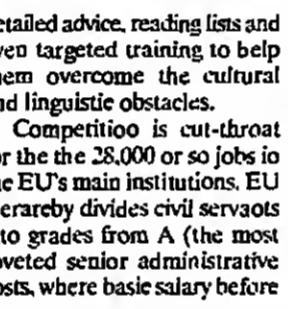
Could you become a senior Eurocrat? Here are some general knowledge questions from past entry exams.



Beethoven: Did he compose *The Messiah*?



Schubert: Was *Unfinished Symphony* his work?



7. Which is the oldest of the following geological periods? a. Jurassic; b. Cambrian; c. Tertiary; d. Carboniferous



Vivienne Westwood: Own fashion house



Karl Lagerfeld: Designer to the famous

8. Who is now head of fashion at the House of Chanel? a. Karl Lagerfeld; b. Jil Sander; c. John Galliano; d. Vivienne Westwood

9. SHAPE has its headquarters near which of the following? a. Washington; b. Fontainebleau; c. Mons; d. Wiesbaden

10. The Congress of Vienna led to the creation of which one of the following? a. Swiss Confederation; b. Kingdom of Denmark; c. Kingdom of Belgium; d. United Kingdom of the Netherlands

11. The European Parliament is elected by direct suffrage for one of the following: a. four years; b. a period fixed by the Council of the EU whenever elections are held; c. five years; d. seven years

12. Which of these states has the smallest surface area? a. Andorra; b. Monaco; c. San Marino; d. The Vatican

13. Which one of the following is not a computer program?

ming language? a. VECTOR; b. PASCAL; c. COBOL; d. APL



Mars: How close to the Sun is the Red Planet?



Galliano: Is he the man who runs Chanel?

14. How many telephone calls can be transmitted simultaneously through an optical fibre cable? a. Approximately 1,300,000; b. approx 30,000; c. exactly 2; d. exactly 33

15. True or false? a. The unfinished symphony in B minor was composed by Franz Schubert; b. *The Messiah* was composed by Ludwig Van Beethoven; c. The Four Seasons was composed by GF Handel; d. The opera *Dido and Aeneas* was composed by Antonio Vivaldi

ANSWERS

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. A
7. B
8. C
9. C
10. D
11. C
12. D
13. A
14. B
15. A is true. The others are false.

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Jobless scorn Jospin's aid offer as cracks begin to show in coalition

The French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, appeared to have failed yesterday to halt a spreading protest movement by the unemployed, which threatens to undermine his coalition government.

Mr Jospin offered a new £100m "emergency" aid fund for the long-term jobless and invited leaders of unemployed pressure groups to take part in an investigation of the failings of the French benefit system. But he specifically ruled out the protesters' two principal demands: a £300 end-of-year bonus and a substantial increase in the minimum social payments to those out of work.

Such an increase, he said, would "turn upside down, even

explode" the government's entire economic and social strategy, based on "growth and employment". It would cost "tens of billions of francs" and destroy all calculations on public spending this year. Although he did not directly say so, it would also put France outside the fiscal guidelines for the single European currency.

The Socialist premier's announcement, at a televised press conference, was greeted with hoots and whistles and cries of "hypocrite" at many of the score or more employment insurance offices occupied by activists all over France. "It's nothing but crumbs as usual... Obviously, he has completely misunderstood our message.

The unemployed can't wait any longer," said Serge Havet, regional co-president for the Nord-Pas de Calais region of ACI, one of the three pressure groups running the protest campaign.

At another occupied office at Gennerville in the Paris suburbs, a protester said: "Eight billion francs [£800m] for the World Cup, a billion francs for the unemployed. Who's kidding who?"

Mr Jospin made it clear that he expected the protesters to abandon the sit-ins, which have been snowballing since before Christmas, and allow the employment offices to go back to work. The occupations had been legitimate, he said, as a

way of drawing attention to the "anxieties and preoccupations" of France's 3 million jobless, including 1.2 million long-term unemployed. But such actions could be justified only for "a while" and the sit-ins should now end.

Leaders of the demonstrations were considering the government's proposals last night but all the indications were that the action would continue.

This is the first time that the French unemployed have taken part in a sustained protest movement. One of the problems facing Mr Jospin's government is that – unlike a strike by the employed – there is little incentive for the protesters to go back to doing nothing.

—John Lichfield, Paris

Germany isn't working and Kohl is in a fix

Confronted by the spectacle of ever-lengthening dole queues, Chancellor Helmut Kohl conceded yesterday for the first time that his government will not fulfil its pledge to halve the number of unemployed by 2000.

"It now appears this absolute goal will certainly not be achieved. But I am holding on to the goal of cutting unem-

ployment as fast as possible." Mr Kohl first made his promise two years ago. At the halfway mark to the millennium, unemployment stands 500,000 higher than two years ago. In recent months the Chancellor has been trying to wriggle out of his rash commitment. On current trends, even his new goal of merely trimming the numbers

might may soon have to be abandoned. Yesterday saw publication of the latest monthly figures, showing again nothing but an inexorable rise, and setting another negative post-war record. According to the Federal Labour Office, the seasonally adjusted jobless figure rose last month to 4.54 million for the first time. The jobless

rate is 11.9 per cent, twice as high as in Britain or the US. While the German economy, growing at 2.5 per cent, is set to expand further this year, experts anticipate little change in unemployment. Some pessimists are even forecasting a rise to 5 million. There is every chance of Mr Kohl going to the polls in September with the

Imre Karacs, Bonn



Models at Munich fashion show wearing gala robes by Gai Mattioli, who used Venetian frescoes as patterns for the embroidered tops
Photograph: Ursula Dueren

Only masculine ministers allowed in the French Cabinet

Should a French Cabinet minister always be a "l" even if, in other respects, she is a "d"? Yes, says the Académie française, the 362-year-old police force for purity of the French language.

In an open letter to President Jacques Chirac, the Académie has rebuked female members of the Jospin government for insisting on the title "Madame la Ministre", even in official publications. Nothing in their ministerial powers, the Académie thunders, "confers on them the right to amend, by their own will, the grammar and usages of the French language".

In French a mouse is always *une souris*, even if he is a male mouse, declares the Académie. A frog is always *une grenouille* even when he is a male. Thus, it is clear that a French Cabinet minister must always be a *un*

ministre, even if she is a woman. "Le ministre" is a masculine word in French; the gender of the minister is irrelevant.

The issue has been made more pressing by a record eight women in the Jospin Cabinet. The Académiciens, sometimes known as the Immortals, are writers and scholars elected for life to pronounce on, among other things, proper grammatical usage. They include two women who have agreed never to be called Académiciennes.

They suggest female Cabinet members are not only committing "grammatical nonsense" but undermining the feminist cause. By creating the neologism "la ministre" they are segregating themselves linguistically within the government. If that is what they want, it will lead to other "ridiculous" developments.

—John Lichfield, Paris

Man dies in Basque blast

A conservative councilor in the Basque region in Spain died in a car-bomb explosion yesterday morning in what seems to have been the first attack this year by the separatist organisation Eta.

The last victim was Jose Luis Caso from Renteria, shot in the head last December, and before that the killing of Miguel Angel Blanco in July brought millions out in protest against Eta violence.

Some former Eta leaders, serving prison terms or in exile abroad, recently criticised the organisation's terror tactics and urged steps towards dialogue with mainstream Basque nationalist forces. The government publicly insists dialogue is out of the question, and the constant stream of threats and attacks indicates that Eta's hardliners remain in control.

Mermaid's head returned

The sawn-off head of Copenhagen's Little Mermaid statue was recovered yesterday and police said it was undergoing laboratory tests in the search for the vandals.

The missing head of the city's best-loved monument and tourist attraction turned up in a box outside a television station. "Apart from the damage done by the saw which was used to cut off the statue's head, it is in remarkably good condition with only a few scratches," said detective chief superintendent Niels Abildgaard. "The return of the missing head does not mean that the case has been solved, so the search for the culprits is going on. We have a lot to investigate."

—Reuters, Copenhagen

Cult leader 'had chemicals'

Spanish police said yesterday that they had found poisonous chemicals at the home of an alleged doomsday cult leader which they believe were to be used in a mass suicide by her 32 followers.

Police spokesman Juan Antonio Perez said the German psychologist Heide Fittkau-Garthe, who was arrested on Wednesday when police foiled the suspected suicide plot, had "brainwashed" her disciples and they would need to be "de-programmed". The group had planned to kill themselves at the top of Tenerife's Teide volcano.

Moscow murder

The director of the Rossiya Hotel in Moscow was shot dead yesterday in an apparent contract killing, police said. His predecessor had also been killed. Yevgeny Tsibulalistov, 49, was shot twice with a 9 mm handgun as he was leaving his home.

—AP, Moscow

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Blair says reforms will go Full Monty

Tony Blair started his visit to Japan yesterday by promising "to go the Full Monty" in reforming the British economy. He also insisted that Britain's failure to join the first wave of European Monetary Union would do nothing to deter Japanese investment. Richard Lloyd Parry observed the response in Tokyo.

In a cultural allusion that puzzled many Japanese members of his audience, Mr Blair referred to the hit film about a group of unemployed northerners who make a living as strippers, in explaining his vision for Britain.

"When it comes to putting our economy on a secure footing for the long term, we intend to go the Full Monty, to use the

vernacular," Mr Blair said at a dinner gathering of senior Japanese diplomats, businessmen and politicians, few of whom had the remotest idea what he was talking about. "To those who may not know what that means, it is an expression of absolute determination," he added.

Mr Blair and his team are in Japan for five days and, behind the polite diplomatic platitudes, they have two principal goals. The first is to dispel Japanese unease about the Government's failure to take part in the first wave of EMU, and to maintain Britain's position as the leading beneficiary of Japanese investment in Europe. On this count they yesterday claimed a prize.

Within a few hours of landing in Tokyo, Mr Blair announced a project by Toyota, which will expand its engine plant in Deseide, creating 310 jobs with an investment of £150m. This was especially welcome given the fuss last year

when Toyota's president, Hiroshi Okuda, hinted that Britain's absence from EMU would jeopardise inward investment.

"This underlies the view of much Japanese business that Britain is the most competitive place for manufacturing cars in Europe," said Mr Blair. "The ability of Japanese companies to trade with the rest of Europe in the euro will be assured."

But he failed to point out that the Deseide plant will be supplying engines to a much bigger car factory, awarded to France after Britain's attempt to win it failed last month. And few analysts believe that Britain is likely to win any more big auto investments in the medium term.

Mr Blair's second goal is to replace the typical Japanese perception of Britain, as a picturesque, traditional land of pageantry, fog and Beatrix Potter, and focus, in Mr Blair's words, on "Britain's creativity, vigour and youth, its dynamism today".



Outcasts: Two Vietnamese boys peer out from behind the fence at Pillar Point refugee camp in Hong Kong. The island authorities yesterday scrapped the rule allowing boat people to stay in Hong Kong while applying for refugee status. Photograph: Peter Parks

SOMETIMES
IT'S EASIER
TO TALK
TO SOMEONE
YOU
DON'T LIKE.



When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone.

Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in?

An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world.

You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing.

A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who fancy us.

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the very problem you want to discuss.

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We'll go through it with you

US air traffic controllers forced to use pen and paper

Fear of flying in the United States was fuelled further yesterday after aviation authorities in Oakland, California, revealed that the computerised air traffic control system covering the Pacific collapsed for no less than 16 hours earlier this week.

The video display system that tracks all aircraft crossing from the American West Coast to destinations in Hawaii and South-east Asia suffered a total failure when engineers were trying to install new software. Roughly 500 aircraft, many of the jumbo jets, were affected, officials said.

During the Pacific blackout, which began on Wednesday

evening, traffic controllers at the Oakland centre were reduced to tracking the progress of planes with pen and paper.

Government officials insisted that passengers were not seriously imperilled, in part because of the sheer size of the airspace involved – 18 million square miles, or one tenth of the Earth's surface.

The controllers themselves expressed concern, however. "Was there any real danger that two planes would collide? No. Was there an increase in the potential danger? Yes," said Mike Ballard, president of the Oakland chapter of the National Air Traffic Controllers' Association.

The software installation that caused the fritz is part of a nationwide effort by the US government to upgrade air traffic control system that has long been criticised for being antiquated and prone to meltdown.

Another control collapse caused major delays and re-routings across the Midwest just before Christmas.

Blaming the Federal Aviation Authority for this week's incident, Mr Ballard commented: "It's another example of it FAA's failure to modernise in timely manner, which is leaving the public at risk."

— David Usborn
New York

Observers endorse Kenyan elections

An observer group drawn from Kenya's main Western aid donors gave a qualified endorsement on Friday to the East African country's multiparty elections, saying they reflected the will of the people, despite flaws.

The Donors' Democratic Development Group, which includes European Union missions and the United States, commended the discipline and determination of Kenyan voters.

In a two-page statement the observers highlighted a series of problems with the election before their conclusion.

"As an overall assessment of the election, we note the con-

clusion of the domestic observers that the results on the whole reflect the wishes of the Kenyan people. Based on our own election observation exercise, this conclusion seems justified and reasonable," the statement said.

The Western observers said political reforms passed late last year came too late to be properly implemented and access for opposition parties to state media was too limited. The observers deplored bribery, intimidation and some instances of violence on polling day and cited a shortage of ballots as the main problem.

— Reuters, Nairobi

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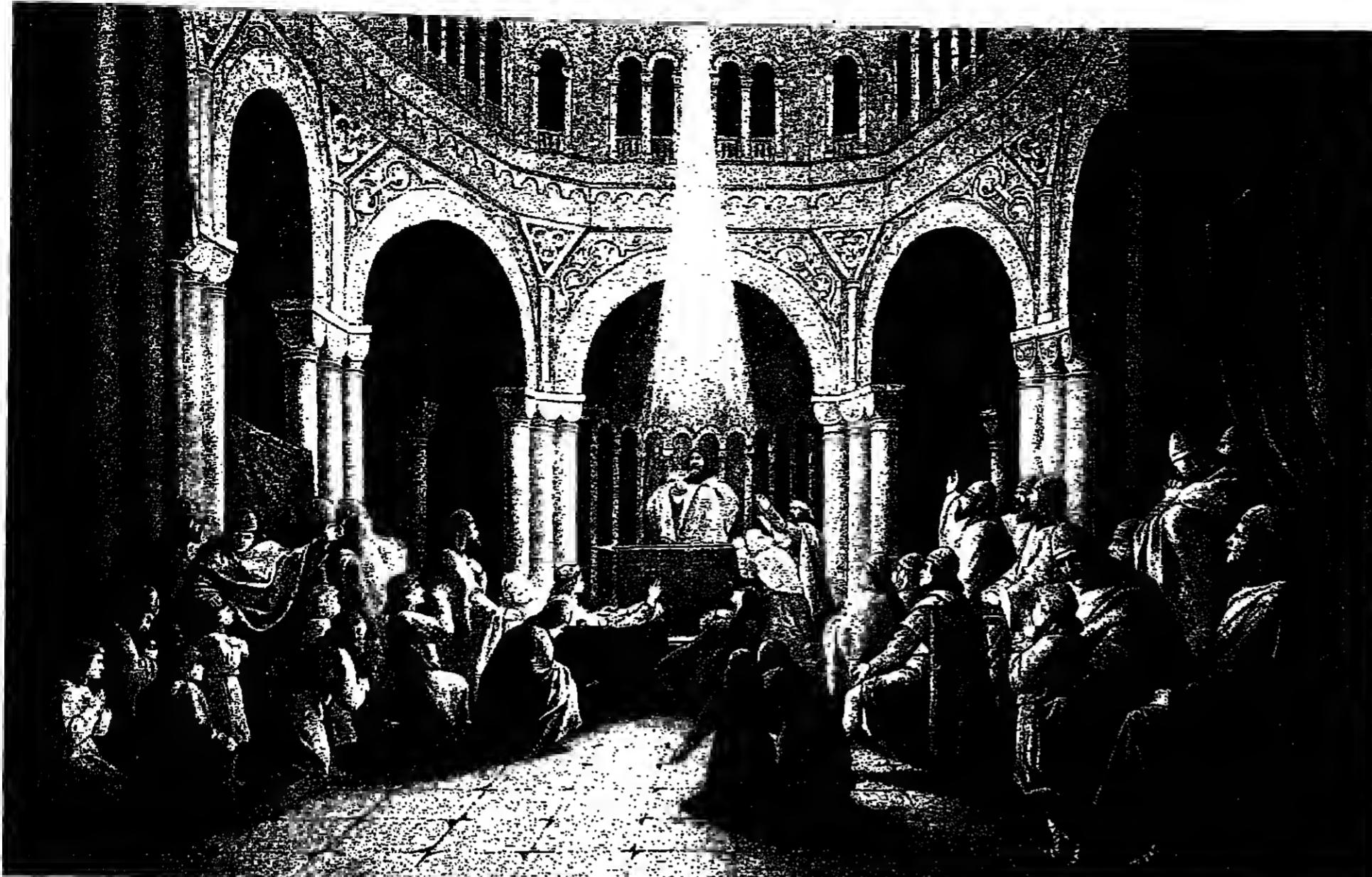
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Kraken on
Is it a dead dinosaur? A
shark? The last
remains of Mr Blobby?
One thing's sure - it's
smelly and on a
beach.
Beyond that, says *Science Editor*,
what's it? Nobody seems to want
to commit themselves.

His wife decides to put things straight



The Grail shines with a soft purple radiance: final scene from the 1882 premiere of 'Parsifal', as captured in a lithograph by C Ritter after a photograph by J Albert AKG London

There are 499 stories in the ever expanding world of opera. This has been one of them...

The world's first opera – Peri's 'La Dafne' – made its debut 400 years ago this month. Since then the number of titles has grown well into the thousands. Antony Peattie, co-editor of 'Kobbé', the opera-goer's bible, explains how, for the latest edition, he and Lord Harewood narrowed the choice down to just 499.

Gustave Kobbé's *The Complete Opera Book* was first published in America in 1919, the year after its author had been killed in a freak boating accident off Long Island. It was never, *can* never be, "complete", since choices have to be made. Even with extra entries added by Ferruccio Bonavia, the original edition still covered only 110 operas in detail.

Since 1954, Kobbé has been through three revisions under the editorship of Lord Harewood, former managing director (later chairman) of English National Opera and founder of *Opera* magazine. His last (1987) edition covered over 300 operas. The latest edition, co-edited by Lord Harewood and myself, drops the word "complete" – it's now renamed *The New Kobbé's Opera Book* – but covers 499 titles. It

omits rather more, of course, including some 50 by Vivaldi, 60 by Alessandro Scarlatti... Further omissions will irritate those with a copyright axe to grind ("What, no Respighi?"), cultists and excessively broadminded bien-pensants. You can have hours of fun going "tsk, tsk".

Kobbé's own style was marked by conviction: he believed in his choices and did not hesitate to enliven plot summaries with personal reminiscences of performances: "I was a boy when, more than 40 years ago, I first heard *Fidelio* in Wiesbaden. But I still remember the thrill, when that trumpet call split the air with the message that the Minister of State was in sight and that Leonore had saved her husband."

On the other hand when the Grail is disclosed in Act 1 of Wagner's *Parsifal*, Kobbé claims that it "shines with a soft purple radiance that diffuses itself throughout the hall"; having witnessed the opera's premiere staging at the composer's own festival theatre in Bayreuth on 26 July 1882, he assumed that its effects would be reproduced at all subsequent performances.

A native New Yorker, Kobbé's selection was largely dictated by the repertoire of New York's Metropolitan Opera. A fascinating document of its time, *Kobbé* found room for six operas by Meyerbeer and as many by Mancini, Italian opera domi-

nates the lists, with now generally forgotten works by Zandonai, Leoni, Mancinelli and Franchetti. Where now are Erlanger, Bruneau, Février, Xavier Henry Napoléon Léonard, Gombourg, Nessler, Thulé? As for "new" works, where are such novelties as Frederick Shepherd Converse's *Sacrifice*, John Adams Hugo's *Temple Dancer* or Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Shanewis*? When we looked at contemporary operas, Lord Harewood and I agreed that, to qualify for inclusion, they had to have been given as an independent second production, since premieres are so often occasioned by pious political reasons (eg the composer is Welsh: it's the Columbus quincentenary). Like all the best rules, it was there to be broken, and I was relieved when Lord Harewood assured me that he thought consistency an "over-rated virtue".

Of the Mozart operas, *Kobbé* originally featured only *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*. Bonavia added *Die Entführung* (Italianised as *Il Seraglio*) under "Recent and Revised Operas" – squeezed between Messager's *Madame Chrysanthème* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Il Tabarro*. *Cosi fan tutte* scrapes in later still: "The Mozart revival has called attention to this slight but delightful opera". But the courage to make such judgements is unique to Kobbé. It still distinguishes it from such heavy-

weight rivals as *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (four volumes, 1992, £550) and *The Viking Dictionary of Opera* (one volume, 1993, £60), which aim at completeness, use many different experts and eschew personal experience of performance.

As the editor of *Kobbé*, Lord Harewood has brought to bear on the entire retrospective his vast, unparalleled experience, gained in senior roles not just at ENO

unparalleled experience, gained in senior roles not just at ENO, but also at the Royal Opera, the Edinburgh Festival and Opera North. I was brought in after the sudden death in June 1996 of Nicholas John, ENO's dramaturge. He was due to re-edit *Kobbé* and I'm sure it would have been remarkable: he planned to cover Hasse (1699-1783) as well as Graun (1703-1759). Before he died, however, he had completed only three, very long entries.

Having attended the same school and university as I, I went on to do much the same sort of job (publications editor at Welsh National Opera). I wish we could have debated *Kobbé* together. I think we might have agreed on one thing at least: because it dares to select from all that is available, *Kobbé* can usefully guide readers towards operas they may have missed. The performing repertory in Britain shrinks as decreasing subsidy leaves companies fearful of experiment. Opera North currently leads the field in regularly encouraging its audiences

to try the unfamiliar; it has, over the years, given the British stage premieres of such rarities as Schreker's *Die ferne Klänge* and Gerhard's *The Duenna*. Recently I caught the company's new staging of Martinu's *Julietta* on tour in Hull, where it reached a large and enthusiastic audience in a week that also included *Cosi* and *Aida*.

Covering opera's murky waterfront for *Kobbé* makes one passionate about many comparatively unknown pieces: Lord Harewood and I both now carry torches for a whole range of recorded but rarely staged works – from Schubert's *Faustus* and Salinen's *The Horseman* (H.110) to Rameau's *Zoroastre* and Strauss's *Guntram* (A.P.).

But my time at WNO taught me that, even when it comes to more "standard" repertoire, British audiences are increasingly long to go more out of their opera-going than mere passive pleasure: hence the emergence of intelligent programme books, Nicholas John's admirable *Opera Guide* series and pre-performance talks. But, unless you belong to the minority who can read music, reading *about* music often frustrates as much as it enlightens. What was needed, I realised, were taped talks about operas that would tell you about the plot and the music, including extracts from recordings. The same thought had occurred to Katie Teale, head of Glyndebourne

Education, and (thanks to sponsorship from the Vivien Duffield Foundation) we have now made 15 *Opera Bites* cassettes, covering four operas by Handel, four by Janacek, six by Britten, and two each by Rossini, Mozart, Rameau, Martinu, Strauss, Berg and Verdi. All the works are being, or will be, staged in Britain – except for Rameau's masterpiece *Hippolyte et Aricie*, the obvious "B-side" (hint, hint) to *Planèt*.

To write the scripts we asked experts who could communicate their enthusiasm, such as John Tyrrell, Richard Osborne, Michael Kennedy and Jonathan Keates. As a result, you can now stick one in your car stereo on the way to the theatre and hear how Janacek was inspired by *Madame Butterfly* in *Kata Kabanová*; how Rossini used an 18th-century ballad tune to portray Count Ory; how Handel turns a chorus into a congregation in *Theodora*; how Britten ransacks American popular idioms in *Paul Bunyan* and so on. The readers include Fiona Shaw, Eleanor Bron, Timothy West and Kathryn Harries. We called them *Opera Bites* to emphasise that they are accessible. Our greatest challenge will come next year, when we try to make *Opera Bites* for works that have not yet been performed...

The New Kobbé's Opera Book is published by Ebury Press at £45. *Opera Bites* are available at £6 (incl p&p) from 0118 978 9303

THE WEEK ON RADIO

REVIEWED BY



ROBERT HANKS

A conviction runs deep at the BBC that live and spontaneous broadcasting has a special magic that the listeners really appreciate. Contrasting the groping for coherence and blundering into cliché that too often characterises the live and spontaneous *Kaleidoscope* with the sharper, better-formed opinions that marked it out in its old, pre-recorded days, you may suspect that there's a confusion going on here between creative tension and acute anxiety.

All the same, there's something quite sweet about a vast, unlubricated dinosaur like the BBC maintaining its faith in the warm-blooded and the agile. If nothing else, it has given an opening to Frank Delaney, who has been put out of action by illness over the last couple of years. Now he's bounced back with *Revealed Lives* (Radio 4,

Monday-Friday), a series of extempore biographies of figures he admires, from Beatrix Potter to Julian of Norwich.

Delaney's model is a series of unscripted talks by Eve Ruggieri, heard on French radio 10 years ago. In her case, according to the publicity material put out by Radio 4, "as the tension built, so did the audience". Presumably there was some hope that this would happen with Delaney. In fact, the talks have been almost entirely devoid of tension, thanks to Delaney's quite astonishing fluency. You get the odd misplacement of emphasis, a few redundant sentences here and there, but really, Delaney is so polished that a bit of gentle scuffing is all to the good. As far as content goes, it's nothing remarkable; but as a display of sheer verbal virtuosity, it's pretty astonishing.

Talking of Dame Julian of Norwich, the 14th-century anchoress, she is what Radio 3's talent for self-publicity makes Paula Yates look like. Let's rephrase that: considering the tiny number of people who are remotely interested in Radio 3, the amount of newsprint it contrives to generate is quite enormous. This week it has outdone itself, with major broadsheet

coverage for Centurions, the series that profiles the 100 most influential artists of the 20th century. Column yards have been devoted to dissecting the (admittedly inconsistent and implausible) list – a magnificent achievement given that the series goes out at teatime on a Sunday afternoon and is, judging by the first programme, really quite dull. Apart from anything else, this profile of Kafka never touched on the most influential aspect of his work: the fatalistic sensibility we call Kafkaesque, with its grim sense of life hemmed in by incomprehensible rules, arbitrary design and self-serving authority colluding to beat us down.

You can overestimate his influence, though. Nicholas Mancini's *The Cruel Sea*, Radio 2's new drama serial on Wednesday evenings, is one of those wartime yarns that celebrate the hemmed-in life: things may be miserable on board the corvette *Compass Rose*, but obedience and mucking in make life bearable. There are some silly, stagey moments in Jonathan Ruffle's production, but it's hard not to feel some primitive stirrings in response to this hymn to comradeship and doing your duty. So much for Kafka.

A WEEK IN THE ARTS

DAVID LISTER

John Tusa, the increasingly combative head of the Barbican Centre, ended last year claiming that arts journalists were insufficiently supportive. "Whose side are you on?" he demanded. Well, that depends on how many tickets you want to give me for the Barbican's meet by Sonny Rollins, John.Oops. I mean:

"The side of objectivity and fair reporting."

Mr Tusa has begun this year spicing the combative ness with a touch of intrigue. Speaking on Radio 3's *Music Makers* programme, he said the real problem with arts reporting is that the journalists don't understand the complexities of the money side. As opposed, presumably, to those whizz-kid arts administrators who keep running up multi-million pound deficits.

He then hinted darkly that there is currently a financial scandal that has not been rummaged. All is well, though. I'm

sure. Mr Tusa, as a former distinguished journalist and now one of the great and good in the arts, would never stand idly by if there were impropriety. He will reveal all, no doubt.

Until he does, I shall assume he is referring to the Millennium Dome rising £750m, minus the cost of Mr Mandelson's entry ticket to Walt Disney World, so make that £748m (allowing for his hotel bills).

With the New Millennium Experience

company visibly floundering on what to put in the Dome, this column will take a regular look at the arts companies and venues threatened with extinction for a fraction of the Dome money.

At present, we have theatres such as Greenwich and the Gate on the list. Next week, the Arts Council's annual grants (and consequent cuts) are announced and the list will grow considerably longer. Whose side are you on, Mr Mandelson?

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THE INDEPENDENT

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THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 10 JANUARY 1998
17

Eternity is an ever-expanding idea. And so is that Dome



EDITOR: ANDREW MARR.
DEPUTY EDITOR: COLIN HUGHES.
ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE,
CANARY WHARF,
LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000
OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435
OR 0171-345 2435

If it is portents of the millennium you want, how about Patrick Moore's Sussex observatory being torn apart by a tornado? Only last week the celebrity stargazer said he expected UFO-watchers to be working overtime as the end of the century drew near. "The millennium will send them all bonkers," he said. That will teach him to be sceptical. It will be frogs and boils next. Followed by the flying saucers themselves.

Luckily, we have scientists on hand to explain that tornadoes are surprisingly common in Britain, it is just that they hardly ever hit houses. A layer of stable cold air, a low-lying mass of warm air, a thunderstorm and - whoosh! It spins, touches the ground, and causes havoc. This visitation has nothing to do with judgment-day, the wrong kind of offering or extraterrestrial visitors. At least not mechanically, anyway.

Same with earthquakes, plagues, floods or eclipses. Imagine what would happen in Cornwall at 12.10pm on 11 August 1999, when it goes dark for two minutes. If we had not been told in advance that there was going to be a total eclipse of the sun. Just three months before the calendar flicked over to a very round number, it could have caused millennial mayhem.

Since the last millennium, science has

replaced religion as the body of knowledge that explains the world. Scientists are now the explainers, predictors and magicians of our society, and they are a more democratic priesthood than the ones they replace. The increasingly esoteric specialisation of their research has been balanced by the huge expansion of the business of popularising science. Science is popular, and popular science is a growth sector in publishing and journalism.

Yet the millennium itself remains the point at which religion meets arithmetic, which could be regarded as the start of science. Paradoxically, they got the arithmetic more right the first time round. The first millennium was regarded as running up to the end of the year 1000, whereas the second millennium is going to be a year short, ending by common usage on 31 December 1999. This is an indicator of the decline of religious ritual, because if people really wanted to mark the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, they would want to get the date right.

But most people know that no one really knows when exactly Jesus was born, and that we will essentially be commemorating a number - a number that owes its origin to our Christian heritage but which has a wider meaning.



The Christian heritage causes trouble nonetheless. The Bishop of Oxford has renewed the church's call for a "spiritual" content for the millennium celebrations, and this week the representatives of various other faiths demanded to be let into the Dome too.

Then, inevitably, the atheists wanted a look-in. But frivolous demands from the National Secular Society for an "Inquisition Pavilion", a "Witch Burning Experience" and a history of the Crusades "including Muslim heads impaled on spears" are hardly designed to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

While the spokesmen of organised religion (and organised irreligion) seem to emphasise differences between people and to look backwards, it is scientists who are striving to unite our explanations of everything and to look to the future.

The real millennial story of the week, then, was the report in today's newspaper that astronomers have concluded that the universe will expand for ever. After our civilisation's first two millennia, we have another 100 million to look forward to. After that, give or take an aeon or two, all the energy in the universe will eventually dissipate and leave it a cold, dark, empty place "with nothing left but rocks". So do not cancel the milk, yet.

The ever-expanding universe is an important conclusion, but does it mean anything practical to the majority of us who would not know a black hole from a mint with the same? The simple answer is, no. It seems that there is not enough stuff in the universe to exert the gravitational pull

that would reverse its expansion and cause a "big crunch" to mirror the "big bang" of 15 billion years ago. So it will go on and on expanding, although because space and time get a hit bent at the edges (this is where scientists start to run out of language and brainpower to explain and imagine) there is never anything beyond it into which it expands. And, even if the universe were "closed", the big crunch would be an unimaginable time coming.

The fact that the universe is "open" hardly seems a subject on which a newspaper can have an opinion. We could hardly declare that the universe has expanded, is expanding and ought to be diminished.

But it does matter that the universe is and always will be, flying apart. It shapes how humanity sees itself. Scientists conduct conversations and arguments at the boundaries of human knowledge, and the metaphors and way of understanding that they employ enter the common consciousness. Big bang, quantum leap, light year. The "open" universe brings us face to face with eternity. When the world did not end in 1991, there was ushered in one of the greatest periods of church-building in Europe's history. If only our growing understanding of the awesome mysteries of the universe would inspire a similar optimism in two years' time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tories and Europe

Sir: As someone who has worked all my adult life in a great industry (agriculture) now being destroyed by an overvalued currency and high interest rates, I find the response of the current Tory leadership to the ERM debacle completely incomprehensible. I also find the Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown's caution on the issue irritating.

The Manchester bid was not late. Whilst Manchester was not among those who had expressed an early interest to government, their proposal was submitted on 29 September, the same day as the updated proposals of the Clyde Heritage Trust and a day before the updated proposals of Lords of the Isles for Canary Wharf in London.

Nor was inclusion of Manchester imposed upon officials. After initial scrutiny it was clear it had substance; it would have been irresponsible to reject it out of hand at that stage if we wanted the best solution for *Britannia*.

None of the bids on the table were perfect. All needed more scrutiny and development. Most were developed further after the end of September. On 17 October all proposers were told by letter that government would assess the Manchester proposals alongside those previously shortlisted. None raised objections.

Many precedents show how difficult and costly it is to preserve historic sites such as *Britannia*. The process in which we are still engaged is not the letting of a competitive contract but an attempt to find the best possible arrangements for securing the future of this piece of national heritage. That is why I announced in December that we are now concentrating on just two proposals, from Edinburgh and Manchester. I remain more than happy to address whatever concerns any of the consortia involved wish to raise with me.

GEORGE ROBERTSON
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
London SW1

Squalid public

Sir: Poli Toynbee (1 January) has revived the debate about private affluence and public squalor, citing London Underground as an example. Increased government expenditure, we were told, would make travel more pleasant. If only life were that simple.

The network recently introduced some attractive new trains, and of course we could do with more. But greater public expenditure does not compel drivers to turn up for work. Nor does it prevent passengers from scattering the new upholstery and floors with litter, spraying the exteriors with graffiti, causing noise pollution with mobile phones, and travelling in clothes scruffy enough for a Communist republic.

Public squalor is as much a matter of private choices as of public expenditure.

ROLAND PEARSON
Pinner, Middlesex

Plans for 'Britannia'

Sir: I do not think it particularly helpful to conduct a debate in the letter pages of newspapers about *Britannia* while I and my officials are engaged in continuing dialogues with those who made bids. Nonetheless I must correct some comments about the Manchester bid in your article "Britannia plans may be scuppered" (9 January).

The Manchester bid was not late. Whilst Manchester was not among those who had expressed an early interest to government, their proposal was submitted on 29 September, the same day as the updated proposals of the Clyde Heritage Trust and a day before the updated proposals of Lords of the Isles for Canary Wharf in London.

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GEORGE ROBERTSON
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
London SW1

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The sleeve of the bootleg Rolling Stones EP which includes the BBC broadcasts

Bootleg Stones

Sir: David Lister claims that he has heard tracks by the Rolling Stones "unheard outside the BBC for more than 30 years" (report, 7 January). He has not had quite such a unique listening experience as he supposes.

Just over 20 years ago I bought a bootleg EP on the

TMQ (Trademark of Quality) label from a shop in Manchester which includes some of the tracks played to David Lister. As you can see from the sleeve of the record, the tracks are "Cops and Robbers" (recorded on 19 March 1964 and broadcast on 9 May 1964), and three tracks broadcast on the BBC's Saturday Club, "Memphis Tennessee" and

"Roll over Beethoven" from 5 October 1963 and "Fanny Mae" from 18 September 1963.

The quality of the record is excellent and I'm sure many Stones fans who may not have ever heard these tracks are eagerly looking forward to their official release.

J R B CASHELL
Walsall, West Midlands

Artistic suede shoes

Sir: You may occasionally find it valuable to employ slightly older journalists. The mysterious text "One for the money/ Two for the show..." employed by the artist Lawrence Weiner and analysed in critical depth by Judith Palmer ("Forget icebergs, let his escalator take you for a ride", 6 January) is in fact the opening lines of the existential masterpiece "Blue Suede Shoes", a song written and recorded by Carl Perkins in 1956.

Please ask Ms Palmer to watch out for my upcoming entry for the Turner Prize, which expresses the eternal torment and surreal fury of human existence and consists of the phrase "A-Wop-Bop-A-Loo-Bop-A-Lop-Bam-Boom" written in crayon on the back of an old envelope.

DAVID BEBBINGTON
Broadstairs, Kent

Cure for congestion

Sir: Professor Peter Smith (letter, 8 January) is wrong to claim that new types of motive power will cure (or partly cure) congestion. Why should they? We could have completely "clean" metal boxes on wheels; but they'd still impede each other's progress unless and until we find a cure for congestion.

Suggested cures are of two main types: those that rely on the price mechanism and those that don't. The first category includes higher fuel taxes (hitting hardest poor car users in rural areas, who cause little congestion); taxes on non-residential parking space; tolls on motorway use; and congestion charges in cities. All of these are inequitable and possibly ineffective in reducing congestion.

The second category includes the demand management measures used widely in US cities, giving strong incentives for car

pool. These are equitable and have proved acceptable. Why do we not adopt them here?

NIGEL SEYMER
Lower Slaughter,
Gloucestershire

Sir: Hybrid vehicles will never reduce congestion; a hydrogen-powered car is still the same size as a petrol-powered one. No amount of new technology can make a car as efficient or as fast through rush-hour as a bicycle.

CARLTON REID
Editor, *On Your Bike*
Newcastle upon Tyne

Out to lunch

Sir: My heart goes out to those heroic women who, according to a survey, spend five and a half hours preparing Sunday lunch ("Pubs and restaurants break records for Christmas lunch", 7 January).

What is it, exactly, that takes so long to cook? Since five and a half hours is allegedly the average, there are presumably some women who are still preparing lunch at teatime. In that case, what did their families eat for lunch and who cooked it?

D A POTTS
Oxford

Post letters to Letters to the Editor
and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 0171 293 2046; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Nanny in the family

Sir: Charlotte Roberts had a live-in nanny looking after her children from 7am to 7.30pm each day, plus two nights a week babysitting ("Nanny on the bottle, parents in the soup", 8 January). Effectively, she was employing the nanny to raise the children on her behalf, with the tremendous emotional commitment this would have involved.

After three years, the nanny became an alcoholic. I sympathise with Charlotte Roberts's difficulties in deciding to get rid of her. What I can't sympathise with is her puzzlement over the nanny's desire to keep in touch with the children. Roberts behaves as if the nanny gave nothing, and was expected to give nothing. She probably never regarded the nanny for a moment as someone she would wish to know for the rest of her life, yet she demanded her devotion to the children. Now that this devotion is of no further use, she pretends not to have demanded it.

In the old days, the true contract of the live-in nanny was at least properly understood: the nanny gave up the best of herself to the family she served, and in return remained part of that family, permanently. I'm not suggesting Charlotte Roberts tries this with her dismissed nanny: it's too late, the best she can do is recognise herself as unfit to employ a live-in nanny. As for girls who want to be live-in nannies, there's only one thing to be said to them: don't risk it.

MEREDITH OAKES
London SW16

Millennium doom

Sir: With regard to the Millennium Dome and the future of us all, it is worth noting that the concrete dome over the defunct (but very much alive) nuclear plant at Chernobyl is beginning to break apart ("New fears at Chernobyl", 8 January). According to reports, the cost of a new Chernobyl dome will be £700m - just the sum the Government is spending (officially) on frripes in Greenwich!

DR M WILLIS
London NW3

Sir: In answer to John Cannell (letter, 7 January), at the first millennium, there was a panic in which a lot of people sold all that they had and gave the money to the Church.

When Jesus did not return in glory to judge them, they went to the Church to ask for their money back. They did not get it.

JOHN C RUDGE
Harrow, Middlesex

Self's the man

Sir: So... women work better but men work more successfully" (report, 8 January). In other words, women are altruistic and men are selfish. Could it possibly be true?

C A BENTLEY
Oxford

living people, is more satisfactory and economical. Hence "Anthea", "Zoe" and "Chris", who clearly pack far more into their lives than real people but are eternally available to be written about.

We already know that Melinda Messenger, for instance, is part-silicone, but that is surely only the start.

The great thing about the Virtual Celeb is that he or she can be made to mate, over-dose, tantrum and so on to order, providing my trade with the raw material in the handiest possible form. Japanese industrialists developed "just-in-time" manufacturing, where the car-door or piece of tubing arrived just when it was wanted in the factory process, and not before. Well, now we can have just-in-time divorces, booze-ups and comeings-out. Brilliant, I think we'll call our one Nikki.

Robin Cook's little local difficulties provide another tricky test about what should be left private and what should be published. I wouldn't want a French-style press, where people at the top can live lives greatly at variance from their public image without the slightest risk of exposure. Also, Mrs Cook, who is hurt and was dumped unceremoniously in the interests of New Labour's public face, has a right to talk about the effect of politics on people like her; all this stuff has come from her, remember, not from journalistic digging. That is why I thought it acceptable to report the bare facts, though not in gloating, tip-smacking detail.

But can it really be argued that Mr Cook's love-life has affected his public performance as a Foreign Secretary? Of course not. Has he pontificated about sexual morality? No. People may tut or snigger but as a public issue, this is all complete nonsense.

Andrew Marr

As a mercenary once said to me, there's nothing frightening about death. It's the bit before - Frederick Forsyth, novelist. I am a grocer's son and you are a grocer's daughter. What problems had you with the price of sage? - Peter Barry, former Irish foreign minister, recalling an abortive attempt to endear himself to Margaret Thatcher

This business of being upset when the Speaker doesn't call them is ridiculous. You can't go into Parliament and be some little petal on the benches - Angela Browning, Conservative MP, on "Blair's Babes"

A little bit of cancer is making me very human - Rabbi Lionel Blue

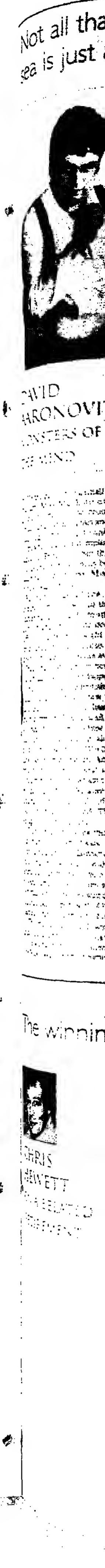
I was nowhere near a nervous breakdown. I'm made of sterner stuff and felt murderous but never suicidal - Christine Hamilton on the "cash-for-questions" controversy involving her husband, ex-MP Neil Hamilton

I thought, do I join in or do I retire gracefully? - Tony Slattery, comedy actor, on finding his fiancée in bed with another woman

One of the things I hate is people pretending that the theatre is real. That, to me, is psychotic behaviour - Phyllis Nagy, American playwright

You have less to do, but then you have fewer people to help you do it - Michael Howard, former Home Secretary, on life in Opposition

QUOTE UNQUOTE



Not all that comes out of the sea is just a blob of blubber



DAVID AARONOVITCH
MONSTERS OF
THE MIND

In 1938 the curator of a small South African museum, Miss MC Latimer, was rooting around in a pile of fish brought ashore by a small Cape fishing vessel and found an unusually ugly and hitherto unknown one. In a somewhat tactless compliment, her colleague, a Professor Smith, named this hideous and by now smelly beast *Latimeria chalumnae*. Doubtless Miss Latimer, a scientist, was thrilled.

But the fish was not new. It was, on the contrary, very old. So old that, until Miss Latimer pulled it out from amongst the piscatorial pilchards on the deck of the *Jolly Kaffir*, it had been thought to have been extinct since the Cretaceous period. It was known to palaeontologists as a coelocanth.

True, the discovery of new dinosaurs is an everyday event. Landships in the Rockies, or cliff-falls beside British beaches, continually reveal entirely new types of giant lizard. But they have one disappointing feature in common. They are all dead. Extinct. Not since Miss Latimer's time has something really ancient turned up alive. No mammoths, no sabre-toothed tigers, no aurochs, no plesiosaurs. And please don't write in and tell me about some insect or boring mini-trilobite which has been found by a geologist from Reykjavik Polytechnic clinging to the underside of a sulphurous rock in northern Iceland. They're not big enough to be interesting.

Then earlier this week there was sudden excitement in the Antipodes. A monster had been washed up on a Tasmanian beach. Five yards long and two yards wide, weighing an estimated four metric tons, it was described by local surfer Ricky Evans as "like a bluberry mass with a few very weird, more defined features, like flipper sort of finger arms. It seemed to have a hairy sort of coating as well."

Theories abounded. It was a prehistoric giant squid, a previously unknown member of the walrus family, an alien from beyond the Milky Way, even drowned Sixties Aus-

tralian premier Harold Holt. Ricky must have been hoping that the dense mass of putrid flesh would be named *Evanisia tammariae*, and that his moniker would be forever linked with a landmark discovery. "Sea Monster 2; the mystery deepens", was how the *Hobart Mercury* newspaper headlined the story on Thursday morning.

Easy come, easy go. By Friday, a spokesperson for Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service, one Jamie Bayly Stark, said a similar fleshy lump found on another local beach had been identified as a bit of old whale blubber. This find was likely to be the same, possibly from the same whale. Spolsport Bayly Stark explained: "As whale blubber dries, it begins to appear quite fibrous, and once it becomes covered in sand can appear hairy, which may have given some people the impression that the blubber was some kind of animal."

If Mr Bayly Stark is correct, then the story is, of course, much less interesting. For us newspaper folk, "Big lump of whale blubber found on beach," accompanied by a picture, is not much of a pitch. And although I have to say that photographs of what became known as the "blobster" looked to me exactly like rotting whale blubber covered in sand, others had discerned in this unpleasant shape features so unique that they had become temporarily convinced that a real discovery had been made.

Now we begin to arrive at the point. It isn't surprising that bits of dead whales wash up on beaches. It's amazing that it happens so little. Whales are very large, there are still (despite the Japanese and the Norwegians) a lot of them, and they have not yet mastered the art of burial at sea or of underwater cremation. So there is a whole lot of dead whale down there.

Almost everything that lives in the sea, dies in the sea. And quite a lot that didn't live there, dies there too. So, if you think about it, the oceans must be full of horrid rotting flesh and carcasses just floating about, carried by unknown streams and eddies. It is one of the many reasons why I, for one, am extremely thankful that evolution impelled mankind's ancestors to move on to dry land, long before I had a chance to be born.

In that case, why is it that the most obvious explanation for the Blobster was specifically rejected by newspapers and others in favour of the monster theory? Well, because we desperately want there to be undiscovered creatures. That's why we have kept alive the myth of Nessie, why Conan Doyle invented the Lost World with its pterodactyls and stegosaurus, why *Jurassic Park* was such a hit.

With the world now fully explored, and with little sign yet of life on other planets, Blobsterology satisfies an almost primal desire for there to be new dangers to discover, hidden here on earth. Suburbanisation leaves many citizens stripped of any excitement greater than that of crossing the road or listening to Richard Littlejohn on Radio 5. But what if there really is a colony of leopards on Bodmin Moor, or a sewer full of escaped crocodiles in Esher, or an overlooked family of triceratops on Hampstead Heath?

So it's all foolishness then, to be lumped in with alien abduction, the influence of spacemen on ancient civilisation and aromatherapy? Perhaps. But suppose for a moment that 60 years ago a Miss MC Latimer had cracked an ugly old fish back into a South African dock with the sentiment that it was probably just a rotten flounder. If you don't at least ask and speculate and theorise, then nothing new ever happens.

Hallelujah! At last the Government has seen the light, if not the Beeb



TREVOR PHILLIPS
ON MUSLIM EDUCATION

They'll be giving extra thanks to the Almighty in the prayers at your local mosque today. One reason is that David Blunkett, the Education Secretary has seen the light, metaphorically speaking and decided to accord Muslim parents and children the same rights as those of virtually every other faith community; he has announced that two Muslim schools will benefit from government support provided they meet the requisite educational standards. The other reason is that since there are no Asian players in the professional football game, it is unlikely that they will have to confront the question of what to do with a football commentator who claims that he finds it hard to distinguish between black players.

Astonishingly, John Motson's insult has, so far, gone unpunished by the BBC: so much for the protestations of the Corporation that it really, really wants to embrace Britons of all kinds. Perhaps equally surprisingly, no black player has been asked for his opinion by any of the major news organisations. You can imagine, however, how those who lined up behind the "Kick Racism Out of Football" campaign must be feeling. Ironically, it is Blunkett who is supposed to have impaired vision; but John Motson's unique form of colour blindness serves to highlight just how radical Mr Blunkett's decision is.

Most children do not, and will never go to denominational schools. There are those who regard such places as abominations, preserving the worst cultural and social division in, for example, Northern Ireland. They often fail to point out that such schools are the most popular in their areas, and that the children themselves feel at ease in them; that it is the way in which relations between schools are handled that may or may not create social conflict; and that the real educational apartheid that exists in Britain today is, as pointed out by Sir Herman



Not everyone wants religious schools for their children, but they want there to be choice. Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

Ouseley, all too often between rotting, under-resourced inner city schools with a majority of non-white pupils, and the rest.

For most of us, this is not a personal issue of course. Relatively few families, even those who profess a specific religious faith feel strongly enough to put the fourth "R" – religion – in front of a good grounding in the other three. Good teaching, distance from home, and children's own wishes generally come first. But I believe that most of us want the choice to exist. It is rather like the majority of TV viewers who spend most of their time watching *Blind Date* and *Friends*, yet insist that the documentaries they never see are an essential component of the TV they like. Millions of Britons who would never dream of sending their children to denominational schools for religious reasons are content to let the option exists, if only for someone else to take.

Given that such schools are supported by governments of all stamps, the Education Secretary was right not to listen to those who argued against allowing Muslim schools. First, on grounds of fairness: most of the opposition seemed to be motivated by sheer prejudice and fear of Muslims; if the wild generalisations made about Islam had been made about Judaism there would, rightly, have been a storm of protest. I would have been monstrously unfair that one recognised faith was unable to share the right to have

its own schools. Second, it is right that there should be choice in the kind of school available. Every child is individual; should the system not try to recognise that?

Third, it is a vital recognition of diversity. Paradoxically, many progressive multiculturalists will feel queasy about state recognition of cultural separateness. The orthodoxy is that every school should be thoroughly multicultural in its curriculum and its practice. By that they mean that every school in the country should carry the same lessons with similarly broad-based references that include people and traditions of all kinds.

The reasoning is superficially persuasive: it is often precisely the schools where there is no ethnic or religious diversity among the pupils that need the most attention from this point of view. Thus, children in Brixton are said to need steel bands as much as those in Brixton. Also, historically should not he incomplete; children should know that when the Tudors created the greatest maritime power ever seen, as well as ruling the waves they used their power to perpetrate a genocide we now call the slave trade.

Whether doing this in all its purity is entirely practicable is questionable, but the principle is clear. However, there are things at which I would draw the line; few things are more painful than watching teachers who have no reason ever to speak West Indian patois try-

ing to force children (many of whom, black and white will be more fluent in Jamaican than they are) to accept it as a natural part of their Eng Lit diet. And all too often, schools, which are by their very nature generalist simply get it wrong: for example, I have very little against steel bands in their place, but for them to become a symbol of Caribbean culture is an embarrassing travesty, which probably makes most black children cringe rather than feel included.

The real aid to diversity is not to force everyone to accept a watered-down, bowdlerised version of a collection of half-baked cultures; it is for different communities to have their chance to create their own centres of tradition, which exist uncompromised and authentic. That is why the right to have such schools as the ones now backed by the Government is so important: it gives a clear signal that in modern Britain being what you really are is nothing to be afraid of, that we can live with real differences, and that we genuinely embrace the new traditions among us.

Mind you, that's clearly going to be pretty hard to achieve on the football field. So far, in

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The winning and losing ways of Will Carling – rugby's first superstar



CHRIS HEWETT
ON A BELATED
RETIREMENT

On a grey Twickenham afternoon in March 1996, Will Carling inexplicably tripped over a loose lump of finely manicured turf during a Five Nations international match with Ireland and plummeted to the floor with his ankle ligaments in shreds.

It was not the first time England's most celebrated rugby player had fallen flat on his face on the big occasion, but it was very definitely the cruellest.

After eight years as captain of his country, Carling was leaving centre-stage on a stretcher rather than on the shoulders of an adoring public.

A more sanguine, less egocentric character might have read the rues and called it quits immediately. After all, Carling had already decided to relinquish the captaincy at the end of a debilitating few months during which he had not only engaged in a neurotic game of one-upmanship with Jack Rowell, the equally complex and self-absorbed England coach, but also played fast and loose with the tabloids, who, unsurprisingly, were more than a little exercised by his "close friendship" with the Princess of Wales.

Sadly, Carling the obsessive held sway over Carling the shrewd careerist. He played another season, both for Harlequins and England, without

ever looking like the world-beater he once was, and at the end of a less-than-vintage campaign he was ignored by the British Lions for last summer's tour of South Africa. If the sporting landscape is littered with the smouldering reputations of those who went one round too many, Carling is now to be found amongst the wreckage.

His final months in the game he once lived and loved to the full were tainted by rows and recriminations, by public arguments and private spin-doctoring carried out by a clique of faithful allies who stuck by him through thick and thin. There were differences with Fran Cotton, the Lions' manager, and a serious falling out with Dick Best, a long-time friend and supporter, which eventually cost the Harlequins coach his job. And then, last weekend, Carling locked horns with Best's successor, Andy Keast, a former London police officer who once disarmed a gunman in the East End. There was, as they say in sport, only one winner.

Yet for almost a decade, Carling was the seminal figure in a golden age of English rugby, an era in which a sweaty jockstrap of a game reached new heights of fashion. When Geoff Cooke, the recently

appointed coach of a forlorn, flabby, under-performing national team, first capped him 10 years ago this month and then handed him the reins at 22, rugby had found itself a catalyst as well as a captain.

Here was a walking, talking set of credentials, a rugged good-looker who could do the business in the studio and on the catwalk as well as on the pitch and in the dressing-room. Carling was seriously pukka, all Pimms and Putney; if England's last folk-hero captain, Bill Beaumont, had looked like a combine harvester, this boy was a 24-carat Roller with full leather upholstery. He was too damned posh to seduce the suspicious provincial die-hards who lurk in the great rugby heartland of the West Country – ironically enough, he was born in Wiltshire – but the Twickenham set fell for him hook, line and gunshield.

What was more, there was substance beneath the glitz and sizzle; during the 1990 Five Nations tournament, England played their most exhilarating rugby for a generation and Carling, every inch a world-class centre, was the personification of the new expansive style. However, the halo slipped; for the first time, when England travelled to Scotland for the final game, a Grand Slam

decider that generated an interest far beyond the usual confines of the union code.

The Scots brought the spirit of Banrockburn to the battlefield that day and exposed Carling as both naive and inflexible in his leadership.

Something similar would happen some 18 months later when England contested the 1991 World Cup Final with Australia. This time, Carling was fully equipped with a Plan B. Unfortunately for him, he activated it against opponents who feared Plan A rather more. Leadership means anything in a game of rugby – and there are those who believe captaincy means nothing at all – the red rose army marched into the biggest conflict in their history without a general.

England would subsequently win Triple Crowns and Grand Slams under their still glamorous but increasingly distant father figure, but the main chance had come and gone and Carling knew it. He was earning a fortune, even under amateur regulations – his lectures to war-struck business leaders on teamwork and motivation would not have been nearly so lucrative had he been the captain of Old Ruhberdians rather than his country – but his naivete and lack of judgement already laid bare for all to see

on the field of play, would betray him again.

Just before the 1995 World Cup, he spoke off-camera to a sports documentary crew and referred to the members of the Rugby Football Union as "57 old farts" – a comment that was broadcast, much to Carling's unworldly astonishment. Old Fartdom reacted sniffily and sacked him, a decision that so infuriated an England camp bristling with player power that they threatened to block any appointment of a new captain. Carling was reinstated inside 48 hours, but from that moment, rugby's enormously influential establishment had him marked down as an outsider. He was no longer "one of us".

In many ways, Carling was

never a natural insider anyway.

Such contradictory characters seldom are. A diffident man with an almost paranoid suspicion of the media, he now intends to pursue a career as a television anchorman. An instinctive "lad" with a rugby player's capacity for umpteen gallons of beer, he has manufactured and financed a lifestyle that virtually disqualifies him from a simple night out with the boys. Quite how he intends to square those circles without his regular Saturday afternoon adrenalinal fix only time – and, no doubt, the tabloids – will tell.

Sir Michael Tippett

Michael Kemp Tippett, composer; born London 2 January 1905; Director of Music, Morley College 1940-51; CBE 1959, KBE 1966; FRCM 1961; Artistic Director, Bath Festival 1969-74; President, Kent Opera Company 1979-88; CH 1979; President, London College of Music 1983-98; OM 1983; died London 8 January 1998.

Michael Tippett died as one of the greatest English composers since Elgar, but the high artistic success he enjoyed was hard-won and long delayed.

He began without a conspicuous excess of natural musical talent. At the Royal College of Music in the 1920s he struggled to gain his degree and master the techniques of composition. He returned there in the early Thirties for further study and, guided in the art of counterpoint by R.O. Morris, finally acquired the skill necessary to speak with a voice of his own.

That it would be a very distinctive voice was apparent from the First String Quartet (1935), though a Symphony in B flat (predating the Symphony No 1) written at this time was withdrawn by the composer along with his earlier pieces. The First Piano Sonata (1937) marked a step towards full creative confidence, which was gloriously achieved by the next opus, the Concerto for Double String Orchestra (1939) – still Tippett's most frequently played work.

With the oratorio *A Child of Our Time* (1941) – a deeply affecting work and an ingenious recasting of the haroque passion, substituting negro spirituals for Lutheran chorales – Tippett's reputation was firmly established, at home and abroad. It was the first of a series of some eight major canvases – oratorios or operas – which divide the artist's career into significant stages.

Tippett was a slow, infinitely meditative worker, and preferred to concentrate his energies on large works – their composition sometimes protracted over very long periods – on which smaller ones would draw for material, rather than busy himself with a plethora of incidental commissions (but his "occasional" music, such as the *Divertimento on a Selling's Round* and the *Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles*, is none the less exquisite). He wrote no film music.

His smaller-scale works are like satellites of the planetary large ones. The Concerto for Double String Orchestra stands in a similar relation to *A Child of Our Time* (both leanly contrapuntal) as the string *Fantasia Concertante on a Theme by Corelli* (1953) to the vastly lyrical first opera *The Midsummer Marriage* (1952), or the mosaïque-like Second Piano Sonata (1962) to the anti-symphonic and Brecht-influenced second opera *King Priam* (1958).

Tippett learnt early on how to hold himself spiritually open to the dawning possibility of a big new work, and how to live with the long-term physical iso-



Tippett in 1974: "If, in the music I write, I can create a world of sound wherein some of my generation can find refreshment for the inner life, then I am doing my work properly. I have to sing songs for those who can't sing for themselves"

Photograph: Hulton Getty

lation and continuous mental planning then required of him. The discipline he achieved served him to the end: he could gestate and triumphantly realise his most ambitious work since *Midsummer Marriage* – *The Mask of Time*, a special sort of oratorio – when he was nearly 80, and go on to create the opera *New Year* (as well as a fifth string quartet, the scene *Byzantium* and tone-poem *The Rose Lake*), in spite of previously having considered his operatic oeuvre complete with his fourth essay in the medium, *The Ice Break* of 1976.

The third opera, *The Knot Garden* (1966-70), is the work in which he disclosed the most autobiographically. It was written at a time when his personal relations had reached a peak of bitterness and severity; as an attempt to confront both his own emotional disorders and those of the age (the Sixties) it is equally agonised and brave. The composer was soon to enjoy an increased emotional and domestic stability (though he always lived alone), but the vision informing his later works is rarely free from scepticism and misgiving.

The affirmative strain – consistently what has mattered most to Tippett – mainly survives in these works as a beau-

tiful impossible dream, an artistic experience at best zany and parenthetical: *The Ice Break* and the Triple Concerto of 1979 look wryly back on Tippett's own earlier music and its lyrical positives. *The Mask of Time* paints a picture of man's evolutionary history that is festooned with ambiguity, and its darker shades perhaps predominate in the memory. The work is far removed in complexion and mood from the earlier oratorio on the subject of time, *The Vision of St. Augustine* (1963); 35 minutes of coruscating intensity, a musical epiphany, and some would claim Tippett's greatest work.

Tippett's composing career burgeoned enormously in the Sixties, when the British musical establishment seemed at last able to drop its various prejudices against him as an obscurantist (a charge invariably levelled against his librettos, which were always written by himself), a lover of complexity (for a long time his scores were deemed impractical, even amateurish), an intellectual, and a pacifist (he went to Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector during the Second World War).

King Priam was a prestigious commission to celebrate the opening of the new Coven-

try Cathedral in 1962, and the following year a BBC studio recording (under Norman del Mar) of *The Midsummer Marriage* made an immense impression on listeners, particularly younger ones. It was becoming obvious that Tippett was a genius among us, a truly inspired figure, a consummate maker of images who had the absolute gift (as he himself once defined it) "of knowing what ensemble is, of knowing what the sounds, the colours are going to be to an extraordinary degree". After Britten's death in 1976, he was self-evidently the country's leading composer.

He was knighted in 1966; in 1979 he became a Companion of Honour, and in 1983 joined the Order of Merit. The Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society came in 1976. From 1959 he was President of the Peace Pledge Union. On the sale of many of his manuscripts to the British Library in 1979 he endowed the Michael Tippett Musical Foundation, a body which has greatly assisted young musicians and new ventures. Apart from his compositional success, Tippett developed a certain reputation as an impassioned if rather wayward conductor, usually of his own music, but occasionally and memorably of Elgar's.

Young Tippett arrived at

Michael Tippett was one of the most personally sensitive and intellectually responsive men I have ever met – generous and exuberant and open-hearted. His was essentially a lucky life; he lived to see every thing he had done vindicated and applauded. Embarrassments and doubts regularly provoked by his new works soon enough fell away, leaving the latter free to sit by the old. In what now seems like a pure constellation.

– Paul Draper

Michael Tippett was a composer of our time, a maverick – as he liked to say – with rare intellectual depth and social conscience, writes David Revill. His was a century "deeply scarred by wars, revolution and other turmoil, in the course of which I've tried to communicate through music some alternative humane values".

Tippett was born in January 1905. His father, a lawyer, retired early thanks to a knaeck for investment. "I loved my father," Tippett recalled. "He was a card, full of quips and jokes that appealed to us children." His mother dedicated herself to "campaigning for women's rights and helping to bring succour to the needy".

Young Tippett arrived at

preparatory school, just before the Great War, with an essay which logically demonstrated the non-existence of God. When, aged 13, he arrived at Fettes College in Edinburgh on a scholarship, he refused to join the cadets on moral grounds.

As a child, he was isolated from the centres of music-making. When he first heard the *Mother Goose* suite of Ravel, he felt an overwhelming urge to be a composer, although his headmaster averred that music could never "pay for a boiled egg, let alone a boiled shirt". His parents chanced to meet a musician on a train, who suggested that he study at the Royal College of Music. They agreed to pay his fees provided he take a doctorate in composition; he began his studies in 1923.

In the months before the outbreak of war, Tippett was planning an opera on the Duhlin Easter uprising. This gave way to the oratorio *Child of Our Time*. His music was partly inspired by negro spirituals; after hearing "Steal Away", Tippett had an anthology sent from the States, and found that "they contained words and tunes for every dramatic or religious situation that could be imagined".

Tippett was patronised – in both senses, he implied – by Edith Sitwell and her brothers, and they introduced him to T.S. Eliot. Tippett asked Eliot to write the libretto for *Child*. The poet suggested he would be better served writing it himself, which inaugurated Tippett's habit of writing texts for his own music.

"I knew even then that *A Child of Our Time* was the turning-point in my compositional output," wrote Tippett.

"Both in terms of technique and subject matter, it made his name, and, like most successful

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS
THOMPSON: Dorothy Isobel Cox, died peacefully on 5 January 1998, aged 93 years. Memorial Service to be arranged. Further enquiries: Brighton Unitarian Church, 01273 330520.

IN MEMORIAM
FORTI: Dorrit Klara. Always remembered vividly – and missed.

SMITH: Gladys (11 January 1919 – 2 May 1997), died peacefully at home. Evelyn Smith (died 24 August 1997). Thinking of you tomorrow and remembering you always with love. Brothers John and David.

Announcements for General Births, Marriages & Deaths should be sent in writing to the Gazette's Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171 293 2011 or fax to 0171 293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line. (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS
The Duke of York, Patron in Chief, attended the presentation of the 1997 British Schools Explosive Ordnance Disposal team to the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, London SW7.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment assumes the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards Parade, London. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am. 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Wellington Barracks, 11.30am. (badged provided by the Guardsman Guards).

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Sir Walter Bodmer, Principal, Harford College, Oxford, 62; Mr Eddie Cheever, motor-racing driver, 40; Sir Robin Chisholm, Clark, former government minister, 70; Mr Tom Clarke, MP, Minister for Film and Tourism, 57; Mr Clive Jones, chief executive, Carlton Television, 49; Dr Peter Mathias, former Master, Downing College, Cambridge, 70; Sir David Miers, former ambassador to the Netherlands, 61; Sir David Neuberger, High Court judge, 49; Mr Denis Peach, former Chief Charity Commissioner, 70; Mr Anton Rodgers, actor, 65; Mr Freddie Starr, comedian, 54; Mr Rod Stewart, rock singer, 53; Mrs Valerie Strachan, Chairman, Board of Customs and Excise, 58; Sir Stephen Wall, United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the European Union, 51; Ms Marjorie Wallace, chief executive, Sane, 53.

TOMORROW: Mr Graham Allen, 45; The Right Rev John Baker, former Bishop of Salisbury, 70; Lord Bowes, former Director, Henry Moore Foundation, 70; Miss Kathleen Byron, actress, 75; Miss Anna Calder-Marshall, actress, 51; Mr David Cecil, racehorse breeder, 55; Mr Henry Cecil, racehorse trainer, 55; Ms Jean Chretien QC, Prime Minister of Canada, 64; Mr Barry Flanagan, sculptor, 57; Mr Mick MacManus, wrestler, 71; Sir Alastair Morton, former UK chairman, Eurotunnel, 60; Sir Anthony Nursing, former government minister, 78; Mr Bryan Robson, former England football captain, 41; Air Chief Marshal Sir John Rogers, executive chairman, Motor Sports Association, RAC, 70; Mr Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers, 60; Mr John Sessions, actor and comedian, 45.

FAITH & REASON

A proper role at the negotiating table

Churches in Northern Ireland have for too long confined themselves to condemnations of violence and comforting its victims. As the peace process in Northern Ireland wavers, Ian Linden suggests that the churches ought to look beyond Stormont for insights into how the peace process might be supported.

The Churches in Ireland "found it very difficult to adjust to the peace process", Archbishop Robert Eames was recently quoted as saying. Understandable enough – and commendably honest – given the symbolic role played by religion in the Anglo-Irish conflict fought out between Republicanism and Ulster Unionism. The recent re-emergence of "sectarian" killings is only the latest reminder of this.

The traditional response to this of both the Catholic and Protestant churches has been to condemn the violence and then largely to confine themselves to pastoral work within their respective communities, particularly in

consoling the bereaved. This is admirable, but is it adequate? Such an inward focus hinders churches to their communities, but makes it difficult for them to reach across the sectarian divide.

Yet churches or their leaders have played a key role both pastorally and as national mediators in peace processes around the world in which they have not been seen as totally neutral. So why are the Stormont negotiations talked about as if they were a unique example of dialogue taking place with a shooting war uneasily in abeyance?

The Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIR) is making a comparative study of peace processes in Colombia, Guatemala, Angola, East Timor and South Africa. Each, of course, has its own unique dynamics but there are certain commonalities. Each process has identifiable stages: facilitating dialogue towards ending armed conflict, negotiations themselves, peacekeeping and monitoring agreements, and finally removing the causes of the war, implementing socio-economic and political changes. The peace process in Northern Ireland is somewhere between the first and second of these difficult stages, which is why extensive

consultations with all groups, including paramilitaries, has become necessary. Mo Mowlam has understood this, and has grasped the nettle with her visit to the Maze prison yesterday.

The example of other countries which are moving along the process is instructive. In the case of East Timor, the United Nations convened the first round of an All-inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue in 1995 and an important unofficial mediator in this process has been the head of the Catholic Church in East Timor, the Nobel prizewinner Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo. The Indonesians view him as a dangerous nationalist but he has been a major bridge-builder.

Studied neutrality has been no option in South Africa. The churches there played a significant role in the peacekeeping and monitoring phase, during 1992-4, in a local and international ecumenical monitoring programme. The Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu became the chair of the controversial Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the leading peace-building structure of the next phase, which attracted a number of church personnel.

In Guatemala talks between the

government and the guerrillas who opposed it resulted in January 1994 in an agreement setting out the framework for negotiations and the establishment of an "Assembly of Civil Society". Although not represented at the negotiating table, the assembly was officially mandated to present the views of civic groups to the parties in the peace talks. Boycotted by the powerful business associations, it nonetheless received the backing of many in the Catholic Church as well as the United Nations. Through the assembly the organisations of the indigenous Mayan people put forward their demands which resulted, in 1995, in an Accord on the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples. The assembly was initially chaired by Monsignor Oscar Arias, a highly respected church leader.

A number of lessons can be drawn from all this. Churches and church leaders seeking to intervene in peace processes face the same constraints as any civil or non-governmental organisation. Certain phases are more open to intervention than others. In the final stages of a dirty war, for example, the interests of both sides usually coincide when it comes to setting up provisions for amnesty laws and immunity from prosecution for those who have been involved in violations of human rights; churches find it difficult to obtain redress for the victims in the face of the military power of the governments or their opponents.

But at other stages – such as when negotiations are in their infancy – churches can intervene effectively and play a key role in the powerful coalitions of civic groups, as in Guatemala and South Africa, to influence outcomes and exert useful pressure to bring back or keep parties at the negotiating table. The special quality of the churches is that their structures enable vital links to be made between local, national and international initiatives for peace. This is important because deals made in smoke-filled rooms in the absence of local peace-making and peace-building are likely to fall apart. And conversely local initiatives that do not dovetail into the national dialogue can simply be crushed, as they have been in Colombia.

The churches in Ireland, therefore, need do more than "adjust" to the peace process. They need to become part of it.

Footsie suffers as gloom spreads from the Far East

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

The bugbear of Asia returned to haunt the stock market. As the Far Eastern crisis appeared to worsen Footsie fell 98.8 points to 5,138.3.

Not surprisingly shares with a significant Pacific exposure suffered the cruellest blows. The Standard Chartered banking group collapsed 50p to 547p, lowest for more than two years, and HSBC lost 54p to 1,379p, lowest for a year.

Last year Standard touched 1,081.5p; HSBC, with analysts forecasting a run to 2,600p, peaked at 2,347p.

Cable & Wireless, with its extensive Far Eastern network, retreated 23p to 494p and international trader Inchcape came off another 7p to 153p.

Until the latest bout of Asian flu, hopes were high that the stock market would soon achieve a new closing peak, topping the 5,330.8 hit in October. Although the under-tone seemed firm, equities

could not be expected to move serenely ahead with so many markets in despair.

New York remained off-colour although the volatile payroll figures failed to create much of a stir.

BT was one of a handful of blue chips to ignore the gloom, ringing in a 2p gain to 502.5p, largely on hopes that it plans another cash distribution through a special dividend. BG, the big mover and shaker on Thursday, slipped 1.25p to 303.75p, although its former gas arm, Centrica, edged ahead 1.75p to 95.5p, reflecting the settlement of the last of its cash-sapping take-and-pay gas contracts.

It was not only Far Eastern banking shares which came under pressure. After recent gains the domestic variety were clearly vulnerable to a downturn and Barclays fell 60p to 1,650p and National Westminster Bank 51p to 980.8p.

Bankers Merchant:

221 City First 1,440p +1.00 2.7 85 260

222 First Direct 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

223 Halifax 1,240p +1.00 2.7 85 260

224 HSBC 1,379p +54p 2.7 85 260

225 Lloyds 1,081.5p +50p 2.7 85 260

226 Northern 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

227 Santander 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

228 Standard 1,081.5p +50p 2.7 85 260

229 TSB 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

230 Westminster 1,650p +60p 2.7 85 260

231 Yorkshire 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

232 Zoetrope 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

Banks, Retail:

220 Abbey Nat 1,000p +70p 2.7 85 260

221 Alliance Lloyds 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

222 Bank of Ireland 99.50p +10p 2.7 85 260

223 Bank of Scotland 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

224 Bank of Ulster 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

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Breweries Pubs & Rest:

220 Carlsberg 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

221 Heublein 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

222 Heublein (I)

223 InBev 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

224 Interbrew 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

225 John Smiths 1,000p +1.00 2.7 85 260

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302 Heublein

BT considers huge investor payout as directory bills soar

British Telecom is considering launching a multi-billion pound special payout to shareholders later this year. The news emerged as BT revealed that customers would have to pay 40 per cent more to use its directory enquiry service. The increase was criticised by one users' group.

Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports.

BT's senior management, including Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive, has told City analysts that the group intends to get approval from shareholders to make a buyback at its annual general meeting in July.

Speculation about buybacks helped fuel a 5 per cent surge in BT shares last week, which closed at 502.5p yesterday, up 2p on the day to equal their 12-month peak.

The hirings are the start of a wider campaign by BT to spell out its long-term strategy, following the collapse of its plan to merge with MCI, the US long-distance phones giant. The existing shareholder authority for buybacks expired when BT abandoned its bid for MCI.

A BT spokesman said the group was keeping the issue under review. He continued: "We're not ruling anything out and we're not ruling anything in."

No price cuts yet for British Gas's low-income customers

Moves to cut prices for low-income British Gas customers collapsed in confusion last night as Ofgas, the industry watchdog, abandoned its announcement at the last minute. It means low-spending homes will have to wait for news of price reductions, while bills for most other customers will fall by 9 per cent from Monday. Chris Godsmark reports.

Ofgas had been planning to issue a press release yesterday afternoon which was expected to announce interim price cuts for around a million households with pre-payment meters. But the watchdog unexpectedly changed its mind yesterday evening, without explanation.

Sources close to Ofgas said some technical details about the statement had not been set-

Despite the decision to seek approval for buybacks at the AGM, analysts remain divided about whether BT would press ahead with the move, which could herald a bonanza of some £5bn for shareholders.

Last autumn BT paid out £2.3bn to investors through a 35p-a-share special dividend, announced with its original bid for MCI.

Executives are likely to wait until the group receives £7.5bn (£4.6bn) in cash for its 20 per cent stake in MCI from WorldCom, the US phones group which is bidding \$37bn to buy BT's former American merger partner. The deal depends on approval from US regulators, a process which is expected to take several months.

Any buyback would also depend on whether BT found another US partner to replace MCI. Sir Peter has surprised some analysts by suggesting that BT is in "no rush" to launch another US deal.

Sir Peter is also thought to have pointed indirectly to BT's own position as a potential takeover target since the government removed its "golden share" in the group.

One analyst said this looked like an attempt to boost BT's share price when the business was facing increasingly tough competition in the UK and was investing heavily to compete in continental Europe.

Meanwhile yesterday's announcement of a 40 per cent increase in directory enquiry prices will see the cost of a call to the "192" UK service rise from 25p to 35p from 18

February. Calls to the "153" international directory service will increase from 65p to 80p.

BT said the increase was needed to fund its £84m investment programme in the service in the next financial year. The database would be expanded to include mobile, pager and fax numbers by 2000. The service lost £21m in 1996-97 on sales of £115m. The cost of directory enquiry services, which were free until April 1991, was cut from 45p to 25p four years ago.

"Very few residential customers regularly use directory enquiries and they shouldn't be paying for it. This is about fairness, with the people who use the service paying for it," said the spokesman.

About 60 per cent of calls to the service are made by businesses.

But Steve Thorpe, of the Telecommunications Users' Association, described the price hike as "completely unjust." He said: "The customer shouldn't be funding new technology when this is a public service."

At the same time BT is proposing to provide directory information through the Internet for free, with customers paying only the normal cost to their service provider.

Oftel, the watchdog, described the price increase as a "commercial decision" for BT, but warned that it had not been consulted about the Internet enquiry service. "We'll be looking at this very closely to see if there are any data protection problems," said an Oftel spokesman.



Prime Minister Tony Blair (left) shaking hands with Hiroshi Okuda, the Toyota Motor president, at the end of a joint news conference in a Tokyo hotel. Photograph: Reuter

Toyota's expansion could herald car investment boom

The Government is hoping to attract a string of Japanese and American car component firms into the UK following Toyota's confirmation yesterday that it is to double production at its Desideside engine plant through a £150m investment creating 310 jobs. Michael Harrison reports.

Trade and industry officials are confident of attracting fresh inward investment into the motor industry in the wake of the Toyota expansion in North Wales. Negotiations on a number of projects are thought to be at an advanced stage.

The Welsh Development Agency is ready to offer Ford an aid package to build engines for the new X400 baby Jaguar at its Bridgend plant in South Wales.

According to some estimates, the new small car, based on the existing Starlet model, will contain up to 50 per cent British content.

will tempt more suppliers of heavy, high-value components such as transmissions to set up in the UK.

Japanese car firms have now invested £3.7bn in UK manufacturing facilities, creating 10,000 jobs. The latest Toyota expansion brings its UK investment to £1.5bn. However, Britain has only been partially successful in attracting component firms. Only nine of Japan's 20 largest component suppliers have manufacturing operations in the UK.

The expansion of the Desideside site will double its output of engines to 400,000 a year and include a new casting plant. Negotiations are still going on over the level of aid Toyota will receive, although it is expected to be less than £3m. The increase in engine production will enable it to supply both the Burnaston car plant in Derbyshire and the new small car assembly plant Toyota is building in Valeocinnes, northern France.

Officials deny that the strength of the pound or Britain's decision to stay out of the European single currency is deterring inward investors, pointing out that the UK continues to attract 40 per cent of all Japanese investment into the European Union.

Total Japanese investment in the UK stands at £31bn out of a total inward investment stock of £140bn.

The Desideside investment

Waterstone set to regain book empire

Tim Waterstone looked set to regain control of his book-selling empire yesterday when it emerged that the music group EMI was in exclusive talks to buy Waterstone's chain from WH Smith and install the chain's entrepreneurial founder as chairman. The deal would create the UK's largest bookselling chain and enable WH Smith to return up to £200m to shareholders.

A trade sale would benefit Smiths as it would involve lower costs that a demerger which analysts originally suggested could value Waterstone's at up to £350m.

It is now thought unlikely that Waterstone's management will attempt a buy-out of its own. Mr Giles and Mr Waterstone get along well and worked together for several months when Mr Giles was first placed in charge of the group.

EMI's interest in merging Dillons and HMV stores, confirmed it was considering a joint venture bid to buy Waterstone's in a deal that could valued the chain at £250m-£300m. Though the statement did not mention Mr Waterstone by name it is understood that he would be non-executive chairman of a new company that would include Waterstone's, Dillons and HMV. Alan Giles, Waterstone's chief executive, would run the merged book division while Stuart MacAllister would remain in charge of HMV. It is thought that both the Waterstone's and Dillons names would be retained.

The deal would be a sweet come-back for Mr Waterstone who failed last autumn in an audacious £1bn offer for the whole WH Smith group. That approach was rejected and WH Smith, under Richard Hanover, the new chief executive, announced a break-up plan to demerge Waterstone's and sell its interest in Our Price music. Waterstone's was due to be demerged in the spring.

Tim Waterstone is being backed by Advent, the venture

capital group, while SBC Warburg Dillon Reed is advising EMI. SBC Warburg acted as Mr Waterstone's adviser during his approach to Smiths.

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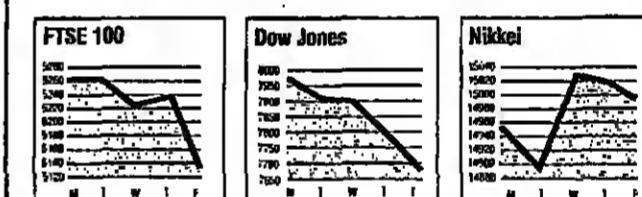
The merged company would have 450 stores (including HMV) and control 17 per cent of Britain's book market. WH Smith has a 15 per cent share. Analysts do not expect the deal to run into regulatory problems.

— Nigel Cope

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

This weekend, the *Independent on Sunday* begins its eighth annual search for Britain's fastest-growing private companies. Many of the companies identified by previous listings compiled by the newspaper in association with the accountants Price Waterhouse have, like those named above, gone on to become substantial public companies. The growing importance of this sector of the economy is increasingly widely recognised. As the longest-running survey, the *Independent 100* has become a highly reliable indicator of future business success.

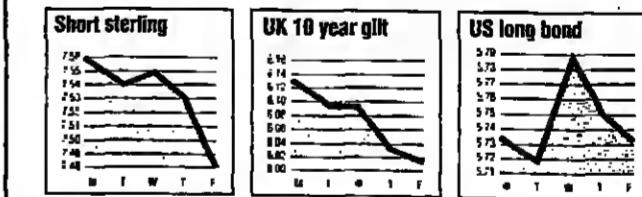
STOCK MARKETS



Dow Jones index and graph as Jan

Indices	Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	FTSE 100	5198.30	-98.80	-1.89	5367.30	4036.90	3.32
FTSE 250	FTSE 250	4864.60	-15.40	-0.32	4963.80	4384.20	3.20
FTSE 350	FTSE 350	2478.20	-40.10	-1.58	2570.50	2013.40	3.30
FTSE All Share	FTSE All Share	2421.15	-36.39	-1.48	2507.68	1996.91	3.28
FTSE SmallCap	FTSE SmallCap	2348.20	3.00	0.13	2470.40	2182.10	2.98
FTSE Flotline	FTSE Flotline	1273.90	0.00	0.00	1345.50	1225.20	3.26
Dow Jones	Dow Jones	7020.00	-119.57	-1.63	1138.00	965.90	1.18
Nikkei	Nikkei	14995.10	-24.08	-0.16	20910.79	14488.21	1.02
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	6894.64	-359.69	-5.09	16820.31	8775.88	4.77
Dan	Dan	4236.94	-110.29	-2.54	4459.89	2866.22	1.71

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates

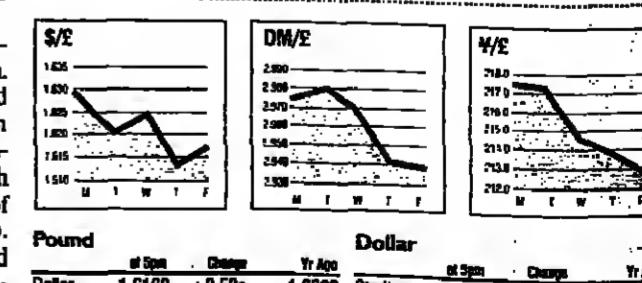
Index	3 month	1 year	1 year	10 year	10 year	Long bond	1 yr
UK	5.56	1.04	1.76	5.82	6.01	1.62	5.96
US	5.66	0.09	5.69	9.19	5.45	1.05	5.74
Japan	0.74	0.24	0.71	0.14	1.68	-0.78	2.50
Germany	3.58	0.45	3.69	0.64	5.09	-0.80	5.64

Bond Yields

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Brit Biotech				Booker PLC			
Stypharma PLC							
Aviva PLC							
Piller Property							

CURRENCIES



Exchange Rates

OTHER INDICATORS

Commodity	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Next Day</th
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one set to
look empire

**JEREMY
WARNER**
ON WHY
FALLING
LONG-TERM
INTEREST
RATES COULD
BE BAD NEWS
FOR EQUITIES

Don't count on a happy ending for markets

The portents are strange this year: tornados in Selby, spring buds in January, floods in the West Country, and now National Savings, which has taken to offering a higher return on short-term deposits than on long-term ones. Long-term savers normally expect to be rewarded for their thrift. What's happening? Has the world gone mad?

Perhaps not quite yet, but the National Savings move does in its own small way neatly illustrate the seismic shift taking place throughout the developed world in investment perceptions and patterns right now.

National Savings this week cut its rates on new pensioner bonds and children's bonds by half a percentage point to 6.5 per cent and 6.25 per cent respectively. Both bonds involve a five-year lock-in. National Savings income bonds, on the other hand, which can be withdrawn on three months' notice, now pay 7 per cent.

The situation is not quite as bizarre as it might seem, since the longer-term bonds are tax-free and therefore continue to deliver a higher effective return than the shorter ones.

Even so, this is a pretty odd turn of events and no mistake. Will we soon be in a position where it is better to save short-term than long-term? Few other savings in-

situations yet exactly mirror the position at National Savings, but they are all beginning to drift in that direction. Actually, what National Savings is doing is driven, not by madness, but by what's happening in the capital markets. Yields on long-dated gilts are now lower than at any time since the 1960s, but short-term interest rates continue at a relatively high level.

The reasons for this are well rehearsed. The newly independent Bank of England has thought it necessary to drive up base rates so as to choke off perceived inflationary dangers. Meanwhile, long-term interest rates have been falling. This is being caused by three factors. In part it is down to faith in the Bank's ability to hold the lid on inflation. Another factor is convergence with long-term interest rates in Germany as Britain warms to the single currency.

But perhaps most important of all, Britain is mirroring what is happening throughout the developed world. In the US, the yield on the benchmark Treasury long bond is now lower than it has been at any stage since the great depression of the 1930s.

So radically do things seem to have changed that it is now possible to think in terms of falling prices during the next leg of the business cycle. Increased competition thanks to globalisation, the effect of

new technology, the Asian crisis and a perhaps overly cautious monetary policy, mean that for the first time since the 1930s there is a real, if perhaps exaggerated, possibility of deflation.

This is having some abnormal consequences for investment returns. One of the big stories this week, for instance, has been the steady stream of announcements from life assurance companies of cuts in guaranteed annual bonuses. Given that both equity and bond prices had a record year last year, many policyholders are going to find this hard to understand.

Again the phenomenon is explained by lower anticipated rates of return, particularly on bonds. Returns on new investment have, in fact, been declining steadily throughout most of the 1990s, but many life companies chose to turn a blind eye to this and continued to declare quite high annual bonus rates by bolstering them from free reserves.

After the sharp gains in gilts last year, the dash can now no longer be held. For pensions business, the fall in returns on gilts has been exacerbated by the abolition of the tax credit on dividends. Annual bonuses cannot continue to be "guaranteed" at former inflated levels. Most life companies are keen to stress that lower annual bonus

levels do not necessarily mean policyholders will be any less well off. Lower returns reflect lower anticipated rates of inflation, so, in real terms, policyholders ought to be unaffected.

Indeed, if inflation does sink to zero or less, as it has done already in Japan, it is possible to imagine a situation where real rates of return become higher for savers than they are now or traditionally have been – on bonds at least. As Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, pointed out in a speech last weekend, since nominal interest rates cannot fall below zero, falling prices for goods and services raise the possibility of increased real interest rates.

Since the middle of last year, there has been extreme volatility in equity markets, triggered by the crisis in the Far East and fears that this might cause a global deflation. At its worst, this might be similar in its consequences to the great depression of the 1930s. Overly alarmist stuff, perhaps. All the same, falling prices, particularly at a time of rising wage costs, would have serious implications for corporate profits.

At the very least, Western industries are going to be hit by a flood of cheap imports from the former "Tiger" economies. No wonder Wall Street is no higher now than it was

last August. Wall Street's bull market is already at an end, even if US equities are so far resisting a fully fledged bear market.

The bull market in bonds has done the less continued apace. Normally the two move in tandem, believing that what's good for bonds is also good for equities. Now the two are showing unnerving signs of decoupling. The effect of this has been to narrow the traditional yield gap between equities and bonds from its "normal" level of something above 2 per cent, to something below 2 per cent. Few market analysts expect it to reverse back the other way, so that "safe" bonds once more begin to yield less than "risky" equities, as they did in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. But quite a lot think the gap will continue narrowing.

There are two ways in which this could happen. Either equities could fall, or the bull market in bonds might persist while equities continue to tread water. Of the two, the former possibility looks for the time being to be the most likely. Don't count on it though. If there is no adequate policy response to the problems of the Far East and deflation becomes a reality, even on a limited scale, we might be looking at a combination of bear and bull markets in equities and bonds. Not good, not good at all.

Scottish & Newcastle supply monopoly blow cheers beer drinkers

Scottish & Newcastle has lost an exclusive contract to provide beer to the Grand Pub Company, the largest independent inns group in the country. Andrew Yates reports on a deal that should herald a transformation of the pub industry, giving customers a wider choice of beers but causing more hardship for brewers.

Regulars at Grand Pub's 4,300 hosteries will be able to choose from an array of new beer brands as well as their traditional tipples such as Foster's and John Smiths. The pub group yesterday sealed a new supply deal with a host of big brewers such as Whitbread and Bass which could see the introduction of best-selling lagers such as Carling Black Label and Budweiser and popular bitters such as Tetley and Boddingtons bitters.

But the news is a blow to Scottish & Newcastle (S&N) who have lost their monopoly over one of the biggest supply deals in the industry which they have held since 1991. The contract is for 1.3 million barrels, equivalent to 290 million pints, and is worth about £250m pounds to the brewing industry. The new agreement is likely to cost S&N more than £20m in lost profits according to industry analysts.

S&N has been forced to increase beer discounts by about £1.5 a barrel. The brewer is also likely to lose a third of its sales over the next few years as drinkers switch to other brands. S&N shares rose 10p to 750p in early trading but fell back to 742p as the market digested the introduction of new rivals.

Now, the Japanese investment bank, created Grand Pub last year after it bought the Intrepreneur and Spring Inns pub chains from Grand Metropolitan and Fosters. The deal will secure higher discounts for tenants which have taken legal action against the chains, accus-

ing the pub chains of forcing them to pay extortionate beer prices in the past. It will also underpin the pub group's profits and increase the chances of an eventual stock market flotation.

The innovative deal allows pub tenants to choose from a shopping list of beers. "This is a ground-breaking move and should lead to a big shake-up in the beer industry with a wider choice of beers on offer but smaller, regional groups with weaker brands risk being squeezed out," said one drinks analyst.

S&N admitted that the announcement was bad news but was not unexpected. "There will be some erosion of our brand position. However, more large independent estates are turning to multi-sourcing and we could pick up volume elsewhere," said an S&N spokesman.

A spokesman for Camra, the real ale lobby group, said: "We welcome the wider choice it offers customers and that pub tenants still have the right to provide guest ales. But this is only the first step."



Jose Ignacio Lopez: Forced to resign over industrial espionage

Former Volkswagen chief seriously hurt in car crash

Jose Ignacio Lopez, the former Volkswagen executive who was at the centre of an industrial espionage battle between VW and General Motors, was last night in hospital in a serious condition after a car crash.

Doctors said a brain scan had shown "areas of cerebral contusions", but the extent of the injuries was unclear and more tests were being conducted. "He is still in intensive care and his condition remains very serious," a statement from the hospital said.

Mr Lopez, 56, will remain under observation until doctors decide whether surgery will be necessary.

Managers buy back RJB mine

One of the UK's smallest coal mines, with a history dating back to the 1700s, has been sold to its management by RJB Mining, the country's largest coal producer.

RJB bought Blenkinsop Colliery, on the border between Northumberland and Cumbria, from shareholders including Alan Wardle, its managing director, in 1990. Yesterday RJB announced that Mr Wardle and his management had bought the colliery back for an undisclosed sum. It leaves RJB with 16 collieries acquired during the 1994 privatisation of British Coal.

Richard Budge, RJB's chief executive, said the decision to sell Blenkinsop was not connected with the crisis over the industry's long term future. "The mine is small and isolated from our mainstream operations. Its activities are best managed locally," said Mr Budge.

Blenkinsop escaped privatisation in the 1940s. Mr Wardle said his family had remained connected with the pit, where he has worked since the 1960s.

The sale included about 25 compulsory redundancies at the pit, which will reduce the workforce to 100.

– Chris Godsmark

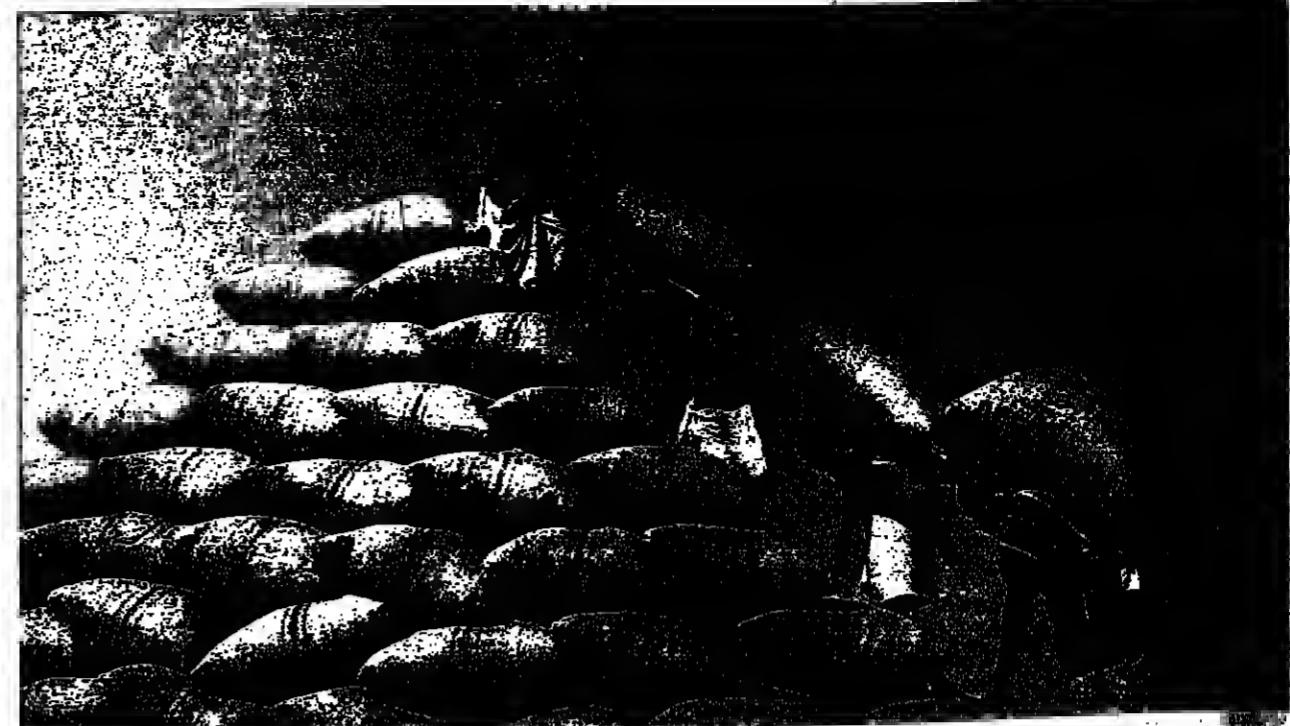
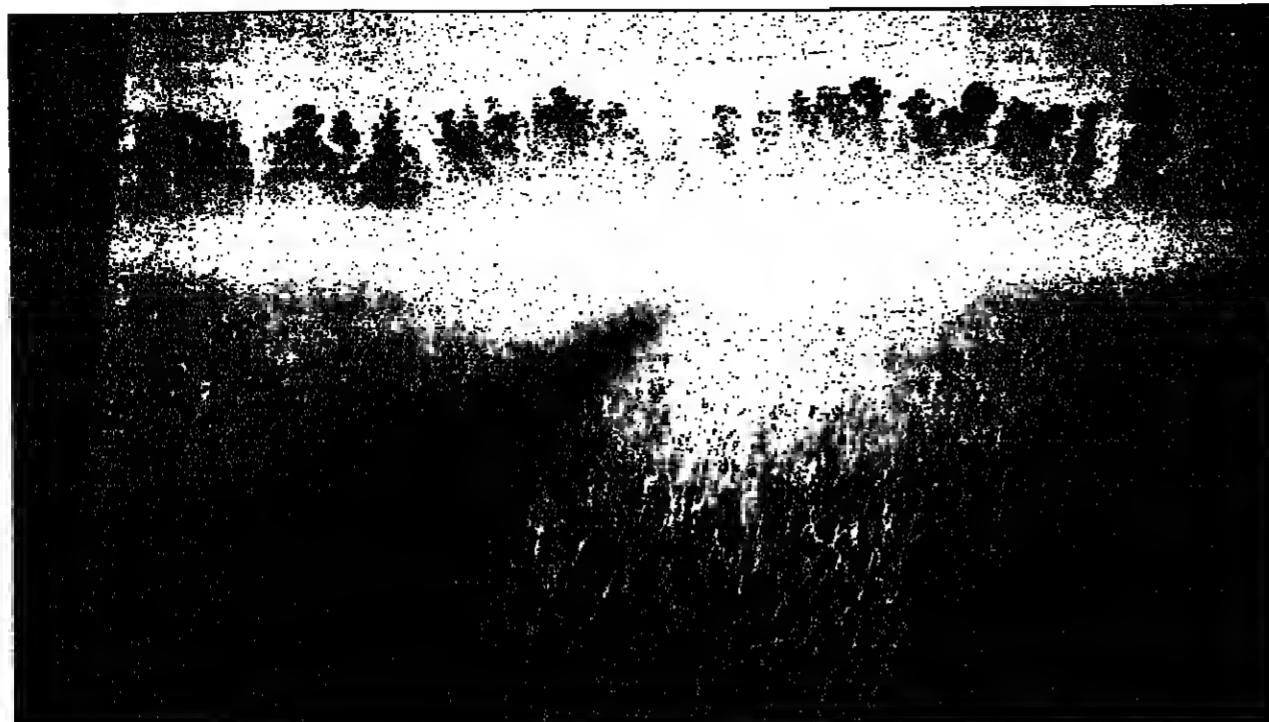
Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	D-Mark	
UK	10000	10000	Argentina	0.8221	0.8350	Brazil	0.6968	0.6998	0.8265	0.8402
Australia	24867	24833	24885	15450	15428	15450	15450	15450	15450	15450
Austria	20000	20000	20000	17000	17000	17000	17000	17000	17000	17000
Canada	13547	13542	13542	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000
Denmark	23061	23004	23004	14271	14257	14255	14255	14255	14255	14255
EU	11533	11533	11533	69283	69283	69283	69283	69283	69283	69283
Finland	95004	95004	95004	59077	59077	59077	59077	59077	59077	59077
France	9840	9840	9840	60891	60891	60891	60891	60891	60891	60891
Germany	23838	23829	23829	18780	18767	18767	18767	18767	18767	18767
Hong Kong	25000	25000	25000	13745	13734	13734	13734	13734	13734	13734
Iceland	11727	11727	11727	76785	76784	76784	76784	76784	76784	76784
Italy	28902	28763	28763	17057	17057	17057	17057	17057	17057	17057
Japan	21282	21282	21282	21287	21287	21287	21287	21287	21287	21287
Malaysia	74486	74486	74486	46853	46853	46853	46853	46853	46853	46853
Netherlands	3327	33015	33015	20500	20461	20461	20461	20461	20461	20461
New Zealand	22844	22875	22875	15722	15722	15722	15722	15722	15722	15722
Norway	12050	12047	12047	17458	17458	17458	17458	17458	17458	17458
Portugal	30500	30000	30000	17000	17000	17000	17000	17000	17000	17000
South Africa	80816	80816	80816	17735	17735	17735	17735	17735	17735	17735
Spain	22653	22653	22653	14513	14513	14513	14513	14513	14513	14513
Sweden	24942	24855	24855	15418	15406	15406	15406	15406	15406	15406
UK	12024	12024	12024	75977	75977	75977	75977	75977	75977	75977
US	17678	17678	17678	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000

Interest Rates

Country	3 mth	Chg	1 yr	Chg	2 yr	Chg	5 yr	Chg	10 yr	Chg
UK	7.25%		Germany	2.50%	US	8.50%	Japan	0.50%		
France	4.50%		Canada	5.00%	Belgium	5.00%	Belgium	0.50%		
Italy	3.30%		US	6.00%	Central	2.75%	Central	0.30%		
Canada	5.50%		UK	4.50%	Switzerland	3.30%	Switzerland	0.30%		
Denmark	3.30%		Denmark	4.50%	Sweden	1.00%	Sweden	0.30%	</td	

Precious rice harvest makes India's winter turn gold



Golden harvest: The moon shines as dawn breaks over a basmati paddy near Karnal, Haryana state (top); Above, freshly milled grains of basmati



Hard labour: Basmati rice is harvested only once a year, and is a difficult crop to grow, giving rise to its status and price. Much of the work is done manually

On the death of his wife, Mumtaz, the Mogul emperor Shah Jahan presented her with the Taj Mahal. While she was still alive his gifts were less elaborate but equally precious and pearly white; he gave her basmati, the prince of rice.

So highly valued is basmati rice that the majority of Indians could only dream of eating it on a regular basis, although the poorest peasant might sacrifice a great deal to

present it at, say, his daughter's wedding. Some 390km north of Mumtaz's tomb, the Taj Mahal in Agra, in the state of Haryana, Sukhwani Singh wades through his golden fields of basmati, shrouded in the dawn mist, checking the paddy before harvest. This area is part of the Indo-Gangetic plain, fed, via irrigation on an immense scale, by rivers originating high in the Himalayas.

This is the only place in the world that true basmati is grown and its annual harvest runs from November to early January. The fact that it is only harvested once a year and it is an extremely difficult crop to grow

PHOTOGRAPHS AND WORDS BY TOM PILSTON

gives rise to its status and price at the local *mandis* (markets). Although some large farms are now mechanised much of the crop is grown on small farms where most of the work is done manually. On the road west through the paddy fields, running the gauntlet of pot holes and rice lor-

ries, you constantly see small groups of men and women wielding bundles of rice threshing out the grain in an old drum.

The *mandi* at harvest time is a mass of enthusiastic humanity flowing between mountains of golden husked rice. What at first sight seems chaotic soon adopts a

recognisable form. Workers pile up rice, scooping it with old cooking oil tins and throwing it in graceful arcs to the top of the pile, or *dheri*. The auctioneer moves from one *dheri* to another with a gaggle of buyers hot on his heels sinking up to their ankles in the mounds letting the rice flow through their hands which are dusty and worn from crushing the golden grains.

The sale ends with a flourish as the auctioneer throws a handful high in the air before moving on. From here the basmati goes to the mills. Some of it is fully processed for domestic consumption but most is exported raw to countries such as Britain, where it has long been appreciated as the perfect accompaniment to an Indian meal.

The only cloud on the horizon other than those brought by the monsoon winds originates in the United States, where farmers are attempting to create basmati or "Tecmati". In retaliation, the Indian government is said to be taking legal moves to protect the basmati name. This may not, however, be necessary – one cannot help feeling that Mumtaz would have turned up a noble nose at any young pretender to basmati throne.

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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 10 January 1998



In the country of the Maroons, an indomitable band of runaway slaves who found sanctuary in north-east Jamaica.

Photograph: J Henderson/Hutchison Library

Mystery, history and the spirit of survival

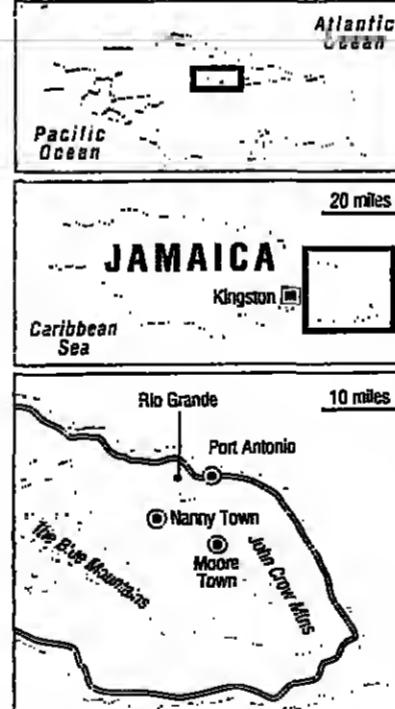
In search of bananas, runaway slaves and warriors, Stephen Thorpe ventures into the Maroon country of north-east Jamaica.

Yellowfin snapper, a chunk of barracuda and a bag of rice would just about see us right, I reckoned, as I boarded the Rio Grande express. This decrepit lorry is the only public transport between the old banana centre of Port Antonio and the lower reaches of an intriguing hidden valley in north-east Jamaica. I was heading for the former stronghold of the Maroons, a formidable band of runaway slaves who found sanctuary at the elbow of the John Crow and Blue Mountain ranges. Provisions may have seemed a priority, but other matters quickly became of more pressing concern.

Our truck was loaded to the gunwales with breezeblocks, building materials for hardy locals looking to establish a more permanent footing in the valley. An old lady scrambled aboard with a pair of goats which settled in beside her. No one spoke as we lurched through down-at-heel settlements, past the turn-off for a tourist rafting experience and the road grew ever more fissured, teetering just feet from the edge of a canyon dropping sheer into the Rio Grande.

After negotiating a landslip and veering from the gorge past Windsor, my fears began to subside. Yet as we proceeded deeper into Maroon country the landscape became more rugged, framed by the twin mountain masses and by myriad hues of green. An hour later we halted in Moore Town, in fact a village, which straggles uphill along the Wildcane tributary. The place was founded in 1739 following a treaty with the British that granted independence and is still the centre of Maroon life, run semi-autonomously by a committee of captains, majors and a colonel.

Their history is rooted in slavery and revolt. Slaves of the Spanish, the first colonists of Jamaica, were freed and encouraged to harass the British when they arrived in 1655. Small bands of independent Negroes survived in the more inaccessible parts of the interior for more than a century. They were joined periodically by other escapees from new British plantations, systematically slaughtering livestock, raiding fields and



buildings in an effort to undermine the colonists.

The great majority of rebels were Coromante or Akan speaking slaves from the Gold Coast and Papaws from the West African empires of Dahomey and Ashanti, renowned for their warlike stance, but today's outsider has no need to fear malice or hostility. Visitors are treated with more disdain than anger and, though welcomes are far from effusive, an appreciation of their troubled past goes a long way.

Occasionally, violence will flare up. A gaggle of disaffected youths, conversing in thick patois, strolled by a wayside banana gathering-ground, an urchin nifly stuffing a bunch under his torn T-shirt. The owner, a large lady not to be trifled with, spotted the felon and hurled abuse, followed by a handful of gravel. "Me kill you to rassle!" she bellowed. It looked for all the world as if she would have – but the scamp was gone.

Nanny, the legendary chieftainess of the Rio Grande area in the early 18th century, exerted a huge influence – originally as a sorceress or obeah woman, then as an intuitive and fearless warrior. When one English hostage was taken, he found himself surrounded by a group of hostile women, Nanny's former associates, adorned with necklaces strung with the teeth of white men.

The site of the main fortress at Nanny Town, on a bluff of the Blue Mountain ridge, was excavated 25 years ago but is now barely accessible, rubble foundations reclaimed by the bush. Yet the spirit of the place is still there – and the word is that any European venturing here will die.

Nanny herself was killed by a renegade slave and laid to rest in "Bump" grave at Moore Town; the monument now is sadly neglected, the area being used by schoolchildren as a makeshift cricket pitch. Yet moves are afoot to establish a museum of culture in Moore Town. Maroon tradition still persists – drums are made by hollowing ackee trees, and rope is produced by twining the bark of trumpet trees. The *abeng*, a cow horn, remains a powerful means of communication across the valleys.

The spirit of the Maroons, of indomitable and ingenuity in adversity, is alive and well at Ambassabeta, a rustic camp perched in stupendous surroundings near the summit ridge of the John Crow mountains. Here Sister Lil presides. She is educated, well travelled and a fine raconteuse – and has returned to her roots for what she terms "spiritual sustenance and guidance". Tall and straight-backed, dressed in voluminous African style, rich in ochre and gold, she conducted a learned discourse on the marginalisation of the Maroons well into the night. It was a tale of frustration – yet in view of their rich and warlike history and Nanny's legacy, it is unlikely that their heritage will ever be destroyed.

Getting there: Air Jamaica (0181-570 9171) flies four times a week from Heathrow to Kingston, British Airways (0345 222 1111) flies three times weekly from Gatwick via Kingston to Montego Bay. Discount agents, such as Jetline (0171-360 1111) offer scheduled flights on Air Jamaica for £480 return to Kingston, or charters to Montego Bay for as little as £315 in February (though few seats are available at this price). Many charters also operate as part of package holidays.

More information: the Jamaica Tourist Board is part of the High Commission, 1-2 Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BZ. For brochures, call 0800-445533 (a call-handling agency). For other details, dial 0171-224 0505.

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3/RUSSIA

Where Lenin meets Buddha

The 17th-century city of Ulan Ude, straddling the trans-Siberian railway east of Lake Baikal, is rarely visited by tourists. Yet a mix of Buddhist monasteries, shamanist shrines and churches of Orthodox old believers makes the republic of Buryatia a unique corner of Russia, writes Lucy Jones.

There isn't much choice of travel when you decide your destination is Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryatia. I travelled on the trans-Siberian railway, squeezed into a compartment with two enormous, wedding-bound sisters and an acrobat from Vladivostok. But one stop before reaching Buryatia the carriage suddenly emptied.

My new companions were Buryat traders returning from China, having bought clothes to sell. Instead of vases of hyacinths and boxes of radishes, the aisle was now filled with canvas bags bulging with clothes.

Being a gateway to the east, Ulan Ude was a commercial hub before Stalin cut it off from the world. The city owes much of its graceful architecture to the merchants who traded here in the 19th century, and it is currently reclaiming its mercantile past in today's commodities of ghetto-blasters and flip-flops. But it's not just Ulan Ude's hustle as a trading-post

that makes it more Asian than Russia. The Buryats are Buddhists and, after years of persecution, are flocking to the monasteries. Since 1991, more than 30 monasteries, known as *datsan*, have been built from locally donated money.

The Ivolginsk *datsan*, set against indigo mountains, is the focal point of the revival – and reason enough to visit this vast land. Sitting on the sandalwood steps of a temple, watching monks hurry by while prayer wheels creaked in the breeze, I found it almost impossible to believe that I was in Russia.

In the morning, monks chant Tibetan mantras in the vividly-decorated main temple, crammed full of statues of Buddha, pictures of the Dalai Lama, tantric sculptures and musical instruments. Some of the monks then retire to the wooden houses clustered around the *datsan* to offer health horoscopes, astrology readings and herbal medicine, for "as much as you can afford".

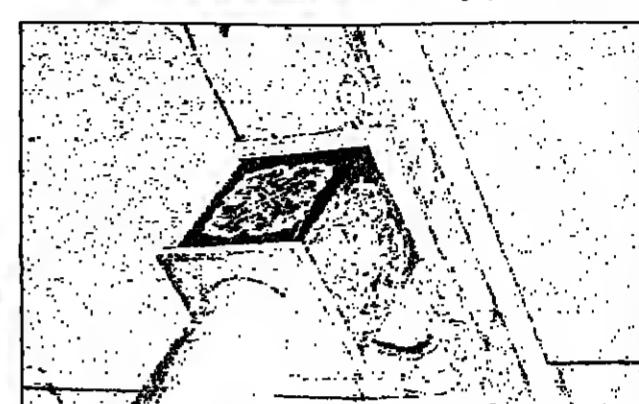
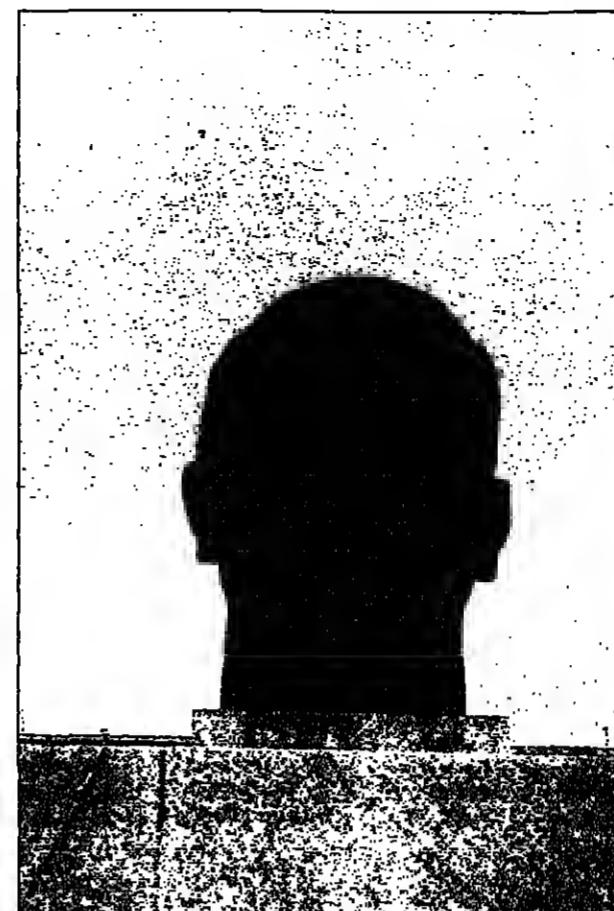
Soon though, the cash tills will be ringing. A large Buddhist complex in the centre of Ulan Ude, providing Buddhist medicine, philosophy courses and Buddhist instruction, is nearing completion; it will attract visitors from Europe to this oasis of peaceful living.

But then, Buryatia has always been a refuge for outsiders. The Old Believers, rebels of the Russian Orthodox Church, fled here in the 17th century to escape persecution.

It is still possible to see their brightly painted homes, and the houses of the White Army officials for whom the city was a base while they fought the Bolsheviks during the Revolution. All this coexists with the indigenous shamanist sacred shrines – ancient rocks, with carvings of abominable faces to scare away evil spirits.

Buryatia is distinct from the rest of Russia, yet the city is home to the world's largest sculpture of Lenin's head, towering precariously over the three-storey municipal buildings in the main square. Made for a Canadian exhibition in 1972, it ended up in Ulan Ude when nobody else wanted it. It now has supports coming out of Lenin's ears, because the statue was in danger of toppling over. Perhaps the citizens of Copenhagen, where the cranium of the Little Mermaid was stolen this week, could buy it.

A train ticket from Moscow to Peking, with a stop in Ulan Ude, costs £420 including two nights' accommodation in both Moscow and Ulan Ude, visa and transfers through The Russia Experience (0181-566 8846).



Looming large: the world's largest Lenin presides precariously over the Buryat capital, where Buddhist imagery is making a comeback
Photographs: Lucy Jones



GREEN CHANNEL

Get rich quick? That depends on which side of the touristic divide you stand. Sue Wheat does the sums

The first package tour abroad can probably be attributed to Thomas Cook's first group trip to Paris in 1855. Package holidays really took off in the 1950s, when travel companies started putting spare warplanes into action. The price of travel fell to a level where the masses could start holidaying to more exotic locations. This year, 14.5 million of us are likely to take a package holiday. But who gets what from a package tour financially? Research by Leeds Development Education Centre in its award-winning Geography pack, *The Final Frontier*, gives the example of Kenya and shows that a maximum of around 40p out of every pound stays in the country.

The Final Frontier is available from Leeds DEC (0113-278 4030). It is also available on CD-ROM.

RED CHANNEL

One of the venues for England's cricket Tests against the West Indies has just been added to the Foreign Office danger list.

"We advise against all but essential travel to Guyana. The situation is tense and volatile following the General Elections on 15 December. Some protest demonstrations have led to violence. Visitors who must travel should avoid meetings and demonstrations and should keep off the streets of Georgetown [where the Test will take place]. Violent crime remains a problem, particularly in Georgetown. Do not walk alone at night, especially in the area of Stabroek Market and downtown Georgetown. Take

additional precautions during daylight hours; exercise constant vigilance, do not dress ostentatiously, do not carry valuable, large quantities of money, video cameras, etc. House burglary (which is often accompanied by violence), and theft from cars are also major problems. Drug trafficking in Guyana is becoming a major problem. Visitors caught trafficking drugs face long prison sentences and very heavy fines. Pack all your luggage yourself and do not carry any items that do not belong to you. Typhoid is still present in Guyana. Malaria is prevalent in all areas outside Georgetown."

Foreign Office Travel Advice is displayed in BBC2 (Ceefax) p470 or call 0171-238 4503

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The ill wind that brought a countryman no good news

To go out on a mountain bike into the teeth of a howling gale may sound like an act of folly, but when Duff Hart-Davis set out to observe exactly how the wind was behaving, he achieved an unexpected insight.

To call the expedition interesting would be an understatement. At one point it became literally electrifying. Yet it started calmly enough, for the lane that climbs out of the valley behind our house lies in a deep trench through wood, and was sheltered from the westerly blast. The tops of the trees were roaring like the sea, but around their roots all was calm.

Just as well, because the hill is extremely steep. The sign at the bottom gives it one

in four. I reckon it is more like one in five – but even that puts a bike at the limit of adhesion: sit back ever so slightly and your front wheel is in the air.

The moment I came into the open at the top, I was hit by a fearsome blast from the right, and progress became a struggle. Then I turned left on to the main road, and instantly was travelling at about 25 mph without pedalling. Thereafter, my meteorological research became fascinating. The effect of gentle contours was much more subtle than I had expected. The noise remained terrifying, but some areas of the plateau, where I had anticipated severe problems, were almost wind-free, protected by minor undulations in the land, which shunted the gale over them.

Now, as never before, I appreciated the value of hedges. In the lee of thick hawthorns the temperature felt 10 degrees higher, and

alongside a blessed, 6ft stone wall I entered a different climate.

My route lay round an anti-clockwise eight-mile circle. For a wonderful mile or so I flew downwind. Then for several miles I was battling with cross-wind, the blast coming from my left. Obviously the penultimate stage was going to be the worst, along a high ridge straight into the gale.

I had set out in a relatively clear period. Then the sky to the west turned black as another storm raged in. The roar of the wind rose several notches. Huge drops of water came hurling past. Rain turned rapidly to horizontal hail. When lightning snaked down out of the blackness, and thunder cracked through the general tumult, I capitulated: Iived off the main road into a village, whipped out my waterproof cape and took refuge against the wall of a building.

Five minutes later, when the hail reverted

to rain, I went on. But the cape proved impossible: the moment I swung into the wind, it acted as a sail. I was blown sideways, backwards. The only solution was to take it off and get wet.

Then came another surprise. The leg along the ridge, which I had been dreading, turned out to be blissfully sheltered. Close study of the terrain – never possible from a speeding car – revealed that the lie of wood and land was unexpectedly favourable, and that the howling flow of air was well above my head.

So my crazy ride provided much interesting information. Yet it also had a wider effect, in that it confirmed a belief that has been growing in my mind over the past few months: namely, that the majority of British people, along with the Government which represents them, could not care less about the countryside.

Three factors led me to this conclusion. One was the revolting deposit of rubbish in hedges and on verges, casually thrown out of cars. Beer cans, bottles, crisp packets and fast-food boxes littered almost every yard of the route, clearly revealing (at best) thoughtless indifference to the environment, or (at worst) contempt for the people who try to look after it.

The second factor was the sight of Limousin-cross cattle huddled in the shelter of a barn. Fine animals, they have been rendered almost worthless by the Government's decision to ban sale of beef on the bone. Never mind that the odds against anyone catching CJD from meat on the bone are reckoned the same as those against winning the National Lottery 14 times outright: craven political correctness has left farmers facing ruin, to no conceivable gain.

The third jolt was administered by the

sight of a fox lying dead in a field below the outside of a bend on the road. Obviously it had been hit by a car and killed instantly, yet it looked perfectly intact, with its beautiful fur coat throwing off the rain.

The sight reminded me of the futility – in humanitarian and conservationist terms – of Mike Foster's bill to ban hunting with hounds. All country people know that if the bill becomes law it will drastically lower the life expectancy of foxes, because farmers, gamekeepers and pest-control officers will barry them more ferociously than now with guns, snares, traps and poison – and still thousands will die on the roads.

So it was that a storm, a scandalous scatter of garbage, redundant cattle and the body of the latter-day townsman despoils his backward cousins on the land. Altogether an inauspicious start to 1998.

NATURE NOTE

The wild weather of the past few days has delayed the seasonal migration of Bewick swans to their wintering grounds in Britain. Increasing cold in northern Europe, coming down from the Arctic, generally pushes them ever further south and west, as they move on in search of unfrozen grass (their staple food) and pondweed. In a normal year there would now be between 300 and 400 Bewicks at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge, on the Severn, but in fact there are only 180-odd. This is partly the result of a poor breeding season: on the Arctic tundra, where the swans nest, the early summer was exceptionally cold, and only three cygnets have reached Slimbridge this year. Another diminishing influence has been the succession of south-westerly gales, which tend to keep the birds pinned down on the eastern side of England or on the Continent. In stormy weather they prefer to sit tight, provided they have enough food. There are now about 1,800 at Welney in Norfolk, and large numbers in the polders of Holland. A cold spell, with northerly winds, will certainly push more over. Those that do reach British reserves live well on a diet of grass and supplementary grain, which builds up body weight for their marathon return journey to the Arctic in spring.

Duff Hart-Davis



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Leafy ways to floral beauty

The key to successful flower-arranging is the foliage. This, and much more, Sally Staples learnt in a west London library.

Judith Blacklock weaves her way through tables loaded with flowers and foliage, throwing a word here and a suggestion there. Though barely 5ft tall, she possesses the energy of a dynamo and enthusiasm to match.

"What's this called?" she asks, brandishing a bunch of berries or a sprig of foliage. The same questions will be repeated several times during her two-hour flower-arranging class, and beginners become familiar with all sorts of exotic-sounding greenery almost by osmosis.

The blackboard looks like a left-over Latin lesson. We read *Viburnum tinus* - which seems to crop up in lots of the arrangements - skimmia, choisya, hederas, fotheredera, hebe, euonymus, and many more.

What strikes you at first glance is that the emphasis here is not on angling flowers to look pretty in a vase. The students are learning that the basis of flower-arranging is choosing the foliage. They are being taught about textures, space, proportion and colour, about what is dominant and what is in danger of being overshadowed or obscured.

Many of the 12 women - there were no men in this class, taking place in a hall attached to a library in Barnes, west London - had begun the 13-week course knowing little about the mechanics of flower-arranging. Nearly all of them were so inspired by the two-hour class that they



signed up for further sessions in the new year.

Carolyn Donahoe, a Canadian, says Judith's classes are inspiring because she offers suggestions and tips rather than rigid formats. "She teaches you to recognise the quality of flowers when you buy them, and how important it is to give them a long drink before they go into an arrangement. You learn to see what will give a harmonious finish, how to judge proportion and form. You learn to follow certain rules, but begin to understand which ones can be bent."

During the first hour the women labour away on their arrangements while Judith offers praise and encouragement. Sometimes she will hold up a half-finished piece of work and ask for suggestions from the class. Everyone is encouraged to look at and learn from other people's work.

Caroline Williams is thrilled with her mantelpiece decoration, which has two lily stems as the focus in a bed of greenery. "I have no real talent or flair but I really feel a great sense of achievement to have finished something like this," she says.

Caroline has spent £5 on the lilies. Sometimes she buys carnations from a supermarket and brings foliage from the garden. All the students are required to provide flowers for each session and the lessons are adapted to suit people who spend only a little as well as those who splash out on £20-£30-worth of flowers.

The students are asked to bring secateurs and some have their own "oases" - water-absorbent bases for the arrangement - but these can be bought at the classes. Sue Robertson says that she became so

interested in the classes that she is now studying for a diploma and finds making her arrangements very therapeutic. "It's great fun when the seasons change and you can explore different ways of presenting things," she says. She has made a ring with hebe, choisya, viburnum, hypericum berries, ilex berries and salmon-pink roses. The centrepiece is a large white candle set inside a hurricane lamp.

At the end of an hour Judith inspects each arrangement, commenting and offering tips. If you see carnations with white

stamens showing, that indicates they are past their best; white and cream colours are most dominant, and purple the least dominant, so a purple-and-white arrangement placed in a dark room will not show up well; anything positioned above a lit fire will dry out quickly, and must be watered frequently.

The second half of each lesson is a demonstration given by Judith, during which the students take notes. What they are watching will be the foundation for the next week's work.

"It is essential to learn the basic structures," explains Judith. "But what I also try to do in my classes is to develop a modern style, exploring shapes and forms. The round shape is the dominant one, and the eye will always follow the round shape."

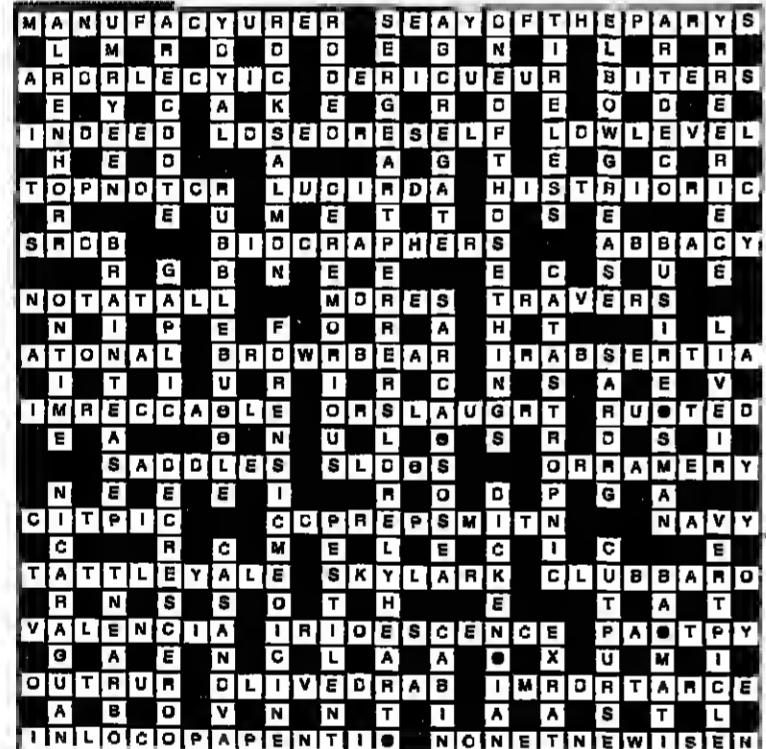
In what seems like a trice she cuts and places a mass of foliage into an S-shaped "oasis" and then inserts winter jasmine, blue anemones, yellow tulips and red roses. Each stem is expertly angled into the base, and like all gifted professionals she makes it look easy. "If you use a lot of foliage and textures, you have to be careful not to add too many colours," she explains.

Judith Blacklock's 13-week course costs £49 (£37 for concessions); for details, call 0181-255 7440. She also runs courses at Richmond Adult and Community College in Twickenham (0181-891 5907) and gives private lessons to groups of up to five people (0181-255 7440). She has written several books, including *Teach Yourself Flower Arranging* (Hodder & Stoughton, £6.99). Most adult education colleges offer courses in flower-arranging and information can be obtained from local education authorities.

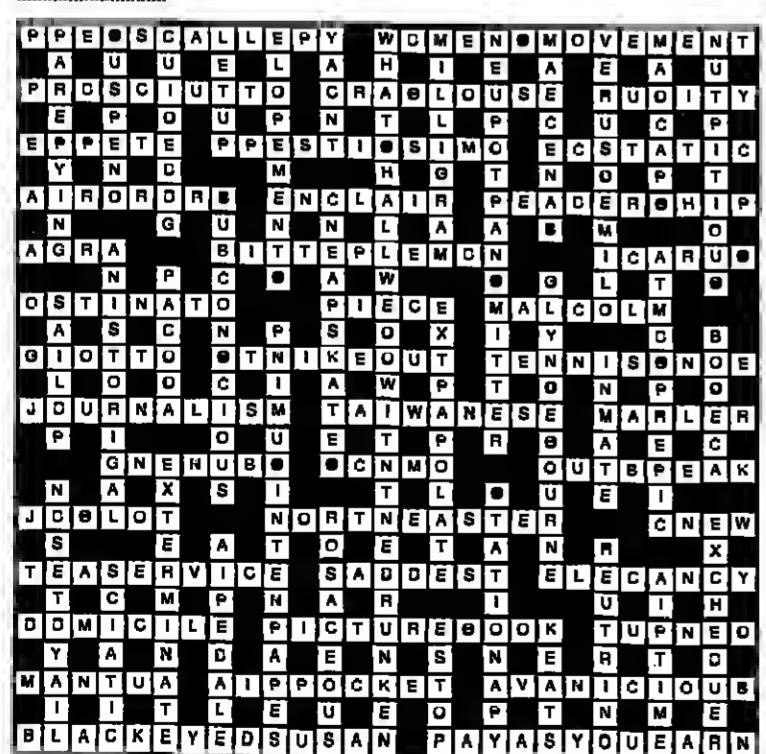
GAMES

CHRISTMAS JUMBO CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS AND WINNERS

CONCISE



CRYPTIC



Cryptic crossword winner: R Moore, Southampton. Runners-up: J Bartlett, Middlesbrough; J Howson, Chandlers Ford; S Keen, Finchley, London N3; P Igoe, Wallasey; J Lewis, Harrow; A Walter, Leitrim.

Concise crossword winner: P Alderson, London SW15. Runners-up: J Frew, London N6; R Taylor, Swansea; A Kelly, Purley; J Foster-Curtis, Norwich; L Langdon, Bristol; R Skyrme, Guernsey.

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

In 1987, Anatoly Karpov faced Garry Kasparov in the final game of a world championship match in Seville. He was a point ahead and needed only to draw with the black pieces to take the title. The importance of the game seemed to overcome him. He played slower and slower, drifted into severe time-trouble, then, when Kasparov introduced some brilliant complications, Karpov went wrong and lost.

With the passage of a little more than 10 years, it seems that little has changed. This time he needed to draw with Anand to win the championship, but again he drifted into time-trouble. This time, the blunder was worse. It is difficult to guess what Karpov was thinking when he played 27...Bc6, but the move cost him a piece. It is true that 30...Qh4? 31.Qxd4 allows a draw by perpetual check with Rg2+ and Rf2+, but simply 31.Qxf3 left White a bishop up. Now the title will be decided by a quickplay play-off.

White: Viswanathan Anand
Black: Anatoly Karpov
World Championship - Game six

1 d4 Nf6 23 Qf2 Bg7
2 Bg5 e6 24 Nd4 Bd7
3 e4 h6 25 dxe6 Bxd4
4 Bxf6 Qxf6 26 cxd4 fxec
5 Nc3 d6 27 e5 Bc6
6 Qd2 g5 28 Ng6 Qd8
7 Be4 Nc6 29 Ndb8 Bxf3
8 Nge2 Bg7 30 Nf7 Qh4
9 Rd1 Bd7 31 Qxd3 Qxd4+
10 0-0-0-0 32 Kh1 d5
11 Nh5 a6 33 Rd1 Qxb4
12 Ne3 g4 34 Rb1 Qa4
13 f4 gxf3 35 Qxh5 Nc6
14 Rxf3 Qe7 36 Qe2 Ka7
15 c3 h5 37 Qf2+ h6
16 Rdf1 Rdf8 38 Rc1 Kb7
17 b4 Na7 39 h3 Rc8
18 Nc4 Bb8 40 Qf6 Nd4
19 Qe1 Kh8 41 Nd8+ Kb8
20 Bd3 Bc6 42 Nxe6
21 Nf4 Rg8 43 Nf5
22 d5 Be8 Black resigned

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

The Honourable Sir Oliver Popplewell, 69, High Court Judge

I've had a lot of fun playing cricket. I've even played on the Inner Temple lawn. In fact we recently had a game there for the Peter May Memorial Fund. It was quite a lively wicket, and we raised a böh or two.

The Bar has a cricket club called the Refreshers, and I'm wearing the tie. It has a beer mug on it, and the numbers one, three, six, standing for one pound, three shillings and sixpence, which was the minimum that a member of the bar could earn when the club was founded in 1937.

The Bar used to play at the Oval to raise money for the Barristers' Clerks Benevolent Fund. There was a clerk called Reg Henty who played for Surrey before the war, and if he made runs, the clerks won. We don't play at the Oval any more - fewer and fewer people come to watch, so the Oval not unreasonably said they'd got better things to do with their pitch.

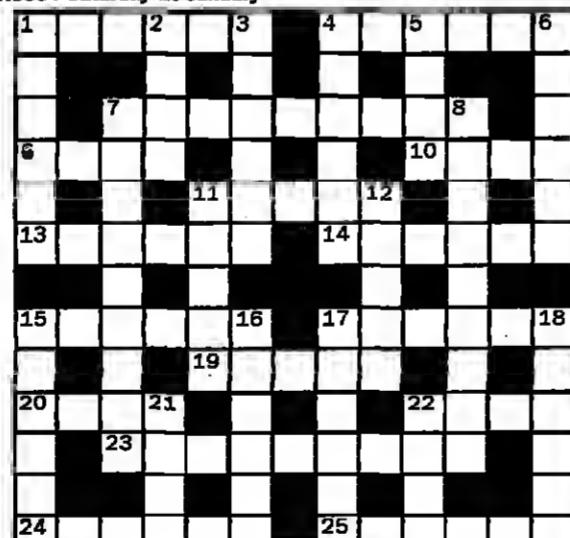
I had a marvellous time up at Cambridge. In those days, we had nothing but test players in the side, and in 1950 we played the West Indies. I wasn't playing because I was doing my exams, but Cambridge made \$20-odd for 4 declared at lunch time on the second day. Then the West Indies made 720 for 3, and my replacement as wicket-keeper dropped Weeks, who then made over 300. So it was "Come back Popplewell, all is forgiven".

My son Nigel used to play for Somerset, which was enormously exciting. As a cricketer, you'd give your right eye to bowl with Garner, or to bat with Botham and Richards. Nigel once caught a very good catch in a final against Sussex, and Stuart Surridge got so excited, he started kissing my wife.

Go out to bat with a 'Purist Original' from Gunn & Moore, (recommended retail price: £199.99) available at reputable sports shops.

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3504 Saturday 10 January



ACROSS

1. Dstein without trial (6)
4. Country (6)
7. Invaluable (9)
9. Press clothes (4)
10. Flightless bird (4)
11. Army rank (5)
13. Public speaker (6)
14. Stinging plant (6)
15. Oppose (6)
17. Deceptions by poker players (6)
19. Sooner than expected (5)
20. Society (4)
22. Percussion instrument (4)
23. Small weight (9)
24. Gente (6)
25. Overthrow (6)

DOWN

1. Deep blue dye (6)
2. Merit (4)
3. Drink of the gods (6)
4. English admiral (6)
5. Piece of work (4)
6. Beginner (6)
7. Chemical element (9)
8. Senior pupils (5-4)
9. Noise (6)
10. Computer accessory (5)
11. Answer (5)
12. Garment worker (6)
13. Plant disease (6)
14. Taste (6)
15. Tie securely (4)
16. Moist (4)
17. Garment worker (6)
18. Computer accessory (5)
19. Noise (6)
20. Plant disease (6)
21. Tie securely (4)
22. Moist (4)

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all: dealer South

North
♦K72
♥1064
♦K1092
♦753

West
♦QJ6
♥J92
♦76
♦J10984

East
♦A54
♥A83
♦AJ543
♦none

South
♦A54
♥A83
♦Q8
♦AKQ62

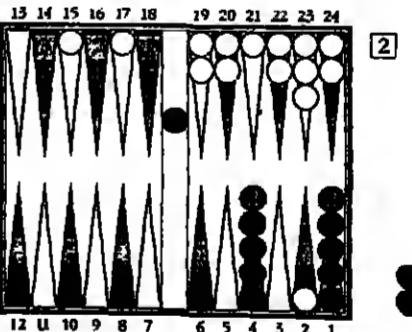
"I saw a hand just like this in a book of problems!" South claimed excitedly after this deal. There was one tiny snare he only remembered the critical play after he had gone down in Three No-trumps.

Upgrading his hand slightly on the strength of his healthy five-card suit, South opened 2♦ and rebid 2NT over North's negative response. Although this was not forcing, North had plenty with which to raise to game.

West led ♦J against 3NT and East discarded a diamond. This was irritating for declarer as it meant that nothing extra would come in from clubs. Never mind, he thought: with a sure side entry to dummy, the diamonds would provide the missing two tricks. It did not work out like that for when at trick two declarer led ♦Q, East allowed it to hold. Now the diamond suit was dead and, whatever South tried, he was now restricted to eight tricks.

Well, what was the theme of the temporarily forgotten old problem? After discovering the tiresome club break at trick one, declarer should have led and run ♦8. If this is allowed to hold, it is easy to establish a second trick in the suit; if the eight loses to the jack, South's queen can be overtaken with the king and (with the vital spade entry still there) two tricks established by force.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



In the box playing Black was the Tempestuous Turk (TT). Minus 20 on the scoresheet and having a bad night, he finally thought his time had come when playing against The Doyen and myself. We had been doubted early and then got involved in a massive backgame. At the height of this game we had made our 1-, 2- and 3-points with an extra man on the 2-point, and our other 8 men were in or around TT's home board.

TT had borne off only two men (shown at the right in the diagram) when he left an early shot. We hit it, but with only a three point board and the rest of the men well spread, we had little chance of containing the man we had hit. Over the next five minutes, however, with a mixture of skill and luck we gradually built up our board, hitting TT's man each time it looked like escaping. In the position above we had just slotted our 4-point and TT had fanned once again. We redoubled.

With an impious wave of his cigar TT snatched the cube. We rolled 62, covering the blot and easily won the game. Was it a take? The answer is fairly clearly no. The blot on the 4-point is covered by 27 rolls. TT, with only two men off would be lucky to win the race more than 8 per cent of the time. If we fail to cover, TT will hit the exposed blot 30 per cent of the time. Thus of the 9 times we fail to cover he will hit 3 times and even some of his hits (41 and 42) force him to expose another blot. He should have let this one go.

This was a case of emotion interfering with rational thinking. After the turnaround that had taken place TT's cube-handling was based purely on not wanting to give up a game that had been previously "won". Mistakes like this are commonplace. They are also very expensive, so remember: keep your emotions in check.

A Cornish cream of a train ride

This week Martha Brae begins a series of great-horned train journeys of train in Cornwall.

Details

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A Cornish cream of a train ride

This week Matthew Brace begins a series of great short train journeys of Britain by riding the Golden Trail in Cornwall.

The Cornish accents of two fishermen on the 18.33 train from Penzance to St Ives were rich enough to obscure most of their conversation but I was able to pick up key words and piece together their story. The younger one, with red-heeled shirt and shaven head, had come off a trawler in Penzance, spent a day off sleeping. He was heading to St Ives to join a smaller fishing-boat for another stint.

The older fisherman had been with friends in Bristol when he was called to join a St Ives boat.

"Do you work the 'Rose ever'?"

"No. Done the *Jezabel*, and the *Tregeseal*. You worked on them?"

"Can't remember now; there's been a lot over the years."

They were riding the Golden Trail, so-called because of the fantastic sweeps of sand at either end. Little seems to have changed on this route since the railway first came to St Ives in 1877. Back then it carried fishermen, too, maybe the great-grandfathers of my fellow passengers. The line carried their catches as well as goods from farms and the mines. This has always been a line for the working Cornishman. Only from the mid-Thirties was its potential as a tourist route realised, when the Cornish Riviera Express, with its elegant restaurant car, ran to and from St Ives.

Penzance to St Ives is one of the shortest train services in Britain but, like all in this series, it is a scheduled route, not merely a quaint, summer-only railway for day-trippers. It must rank among one of the most picturesque commutes in Britain. A little under 10 miles of track runs from Penzance, the last sizeable town in the South-west, to St Ives, the fishing village that became the haunt of artists and now as its own Tate Gallery. The journey takes just 19 minutes.

At Penzance a raging sea lies just yards from the station; when wild weather hits here it comes straight out of the Atlantic. Spray sheets over the sea wall, lashing the platforms, and the boats in the harbour rock violently in the wind.

Cornwall was the last English county to be linked to the main railway system – by the Great Western Railway (GWR), known more poetically as God's Wonderful Railway.

The St Ives service runs every half hour or so. It chugs along the shore for about a mile, with only the South West Coast Path between it and the surf. On the right is the imposing bulk of St Michael's Mount; sit on the left and you may see the Scilly Islands helicopter take off.

Shortly before the small village of Marazion, the track heads inland across a nature reserve known for its terrifying flocks of starlings that swoop down here of an evening. The train winds through the Cornish interior via a series of embankments cut through the rocks, and makes its first stop at St Erth. From here the mainline to London runs east through Cornwall, but the Golden Trail continues north.

At Lelant Saltings station, a park-and-ride has been set up, so people can leave their cars and hop on to the train for St Ives. It is an excellent site; St Ives on a holiday weekend is teeming with traffic trying to park.

The line curves round the shore by Porth Kidney Sands, where the river Hayle empties into the Bristol Channel, and runs through Carbis Bay and into St Ives, offering arguably the best approach to the town.

After exploring the town, make for the warmth of the 14th-century Sloop Inn, with its snug rooms decorated with the black and white sketches of local artists and crowded with yet more fishermen, swapping more stories.

On the footplate

When to go: the Golden Trail is open all year; go in spring and winter for ever-changing skies, in summer for day-long sunshine.

What to take: binoculars, maps, bucket and spade

What to see: St Michael's Mount (at low tide, via a causeway), tin mines (now museums)

How much: one-way fares cost £1.30 (under-16s), £2.60 adults; round trip (after 9am) £1.35 (under-16s), £2.70 adults; under-fives and bicycles (only two bikes per train) free

Details: National Rail Enquiries (0845 484950); Cornwall Tourist Board (01872 274057)



Unloose the dogs of squelch

Imagine gliding silently across the snow, a wintry scene unfolding before you as you emerge from the forest, pulled by a team of willing huskies. Now imagine bumping squelchily along muddy tracks, with a foggy backdrop of Northamptonshire farmland, pulled by a bunch of wet dogs. Eric Kendall takes to the sled – on wheels.

Given the option, most people would go for the snowy ride, but Britain's dog sledgers rarely have a choice. Sledging here takes a special combination of dedication to the sport, love of the dogs and a bit more besides; it's no joke to house train and feed a couple of them, let alone eight or 10.

The surprising news that they've been banished from the Antarctic in favour of petrol power becomes as clear as well, mud, when you see a team in action.

For most of a British season, training and competition involves rigs: three-wheeled chariots that would have earned Ben Hur a steward's enquiry for their lightweight steel frames, state-of-the-art mountain bike components and knobby tyres. In winter, when most people train after dark on week-days, powerful headlamps are essential.

Getting a team organised to run is fraught, with or without snow. The straining, yapping and moaning, amid a tangle of cords and fur, reaches fever pitch. Once the mushers have got their boots on, the dogs come out, harnessed one by one and linked together on gang lines – amazingly, the leaps and turns of the team don't cause a total snarl-up as often as would seem inevitable.

Sensing the off, the dogs are almost as excited as the mushers. Their fidgeting, baying and lunging exude anticipation which finally explodes into forward motion. At the chariot end, all you can do is hang on

tight as the rig jolts forward, and your shouts – it doesn't really matter what – urge them on while you paddle with one foot or even run up steep sections. The brakes, which lie reassuringly to hand, are only good for preventing the rig from running downhill into the dogs' legs – not for pulling the team to a halt. If mushers come off, they can be towed along for ages on the end of a safety line which ensures they never lose the team.

Once you're up and running, the terrain provides half the challenge. Well-trained dogs follow the track and respond to the commands "Gee" (right) and "Haw" (left). They'll even stop (Whoa) when you tell them, unless they've got fleeing wildlife in their sights: badgers are a favourite, but anything alive will do.

When a lead dog smells something

worth further investigation, and performs a sharp turn, a good team follows in unison in a disciplined manoeuvre that has a "years of training" look to it, right up until the moment when you career into the back of the bunch. That's all it takes to learn that the rig unfailingly goes where the dogs go, and that with all the mud, the brakes don't really work, even if you've got the reactions to grab them in time.

Untangling the mess is a chance for team bonding, but it's also the one time the dogs look as though they may rear each other apart. Under way again, you can concentrate on how you're going to turn around (a kind of deliberate version of the above) and, when you've done so, how to turn the team into retracing their steps (never popular). Then there are the same smell-traps on the return leg, for which you are at least forewarned, but so are the dogs. Running a circular route is a better bet for all concerned.

Depending on the distance run, the dogs may well be itching for the off again almost before they've stopped. And even if they look tired, don't take any chances: for these creatures, pulling is not just a way of life, it's an instinct – hitching them to the

humper of your car could be the quickest way to lose both your dogs and your more conventional form of transport in one go.

The dogs

The best sled dogs are relatively lightweight, good-natured Siberian huskies. They are ideal for hauling a shared weight all day at a steady pace. In racing terms, smaller teams travel at comparable speeds to bigger ones but generally run shorter courses. Between two and eight dogs are normally used. Various other breeds are also used in different classes.

Though Siberian huskies obey many commands as sled dogs, they can't be

trained off the lead – once they're off they're away for good. In this respect they make lousy pets. They are well adapted to a cold, snowy environment: along with thick coats, they have webbed feet, and long eyelashes and hairy ears to keep out the snow. Though they are considered to be working dogs, it's surprising to find how affectionate they are. It's doubly rewarding to have one of them leap into your arms through sheer enthusiasm, as to the uninitiated they look like wolves.

For further information contact the Siberian Husky Club of Great Britain (01604 686 281). Send an A4 sac (enclosing two extra first-class stamps) for breed

and dog-sledding information to: Penny Evans, Honorary Secretary, SHCGB, The Old Post Office, 3 High Street, Lamport, Northampton NN6 9HB.

Dog-sledding in the UK

Scotland is the obvious place, with the best chance of regular snow. The Aviemore Snow Rally 1998, on 24-25 January, is the best place to spectate and find out more about the sport, with a good chance of snow and around 180 teams competing in the Glenmore Forest. Contact the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Office (01479 810363) for details. Other competitions are held throughout the UK, mostly on wheels.

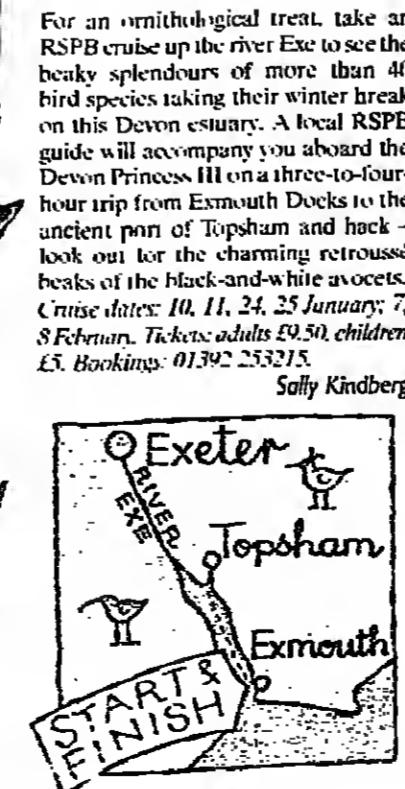
In the first week of February, weather permitting, Alan Stewart (01546 603915) will be sledding through the Cairngorms with his 12-year-old son, John, and meeting up with the polar explorer Borge Ousland, who will ski into the range towing his Antarctic sledge. The aim of the expedition, "Travellers of the Cold", is to go through the UK's most remote area at a demanding time of year, using dog teams under conditions in which they excel.

Dog-sledding abroad

Alaska's 1,049-mile Iditarod Trail Race, held in March, is the best known dog-sledding event. Canada and Alaska, where sledding started, have endless terrain and opportunities for day trips and longer expeditions. Try Algonquin Way Kennels (001 613 332 4005) for trips into Algonquin Park, Ontario.

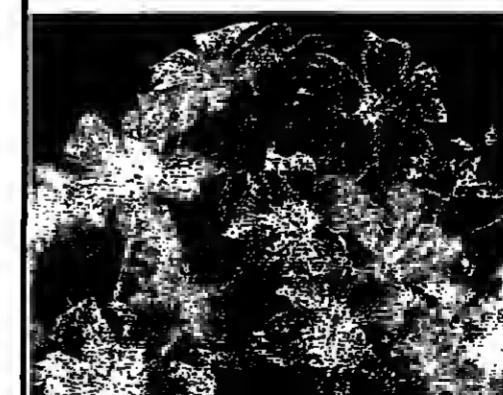
There are also chances to drive or ride in Iceland and Scandinavia, and, increasingly, in Continental ski resorts.

What, when, where ...



For an ornithological treat, take an RSPB cruise up the river Exe to see the beaky splendours of more than 400 bird species taking their winter break on this Devon estuary. A local RSPB guide will accompany you aboard the Devon Princess III on a three-to-four-hour trip from Exmouth Docks to the ancient port of Topsham and back – look out for the charming retrousse beaks of the black-and-white avocets. Cruise dates: 10, 11, 24, 25 January; 7, 8 February. Tickets: adults £9.50, children £5. Booking: 01392 253215. Sally Kindberg

THE INDEPENDENT

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for just £8.95

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The flowering period for these lovely plants is between June and September so you'll get plenty of colour from them. After the first flush, the flowers can be trimmed back to encourage them to flower for a second time.

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Eddery's back: that means a new challenge not an old crisis

Despite surgery on his spine that ended his season prematurely last year, Pat Eddery is fired up to pursue Lester Piggott's career total of 4,493 wins. He also has some words of warning for Frankie Dettori.

After a while, as you have settled into Pat Eddery's Crystal Palace of a conservatory, you feel brave enough to mention the word retirement. Pat ponders for a moment, considering whether you mean you or him, and then reacts as if you've suggested castration on his kitchen table. He'd happily carry it out on his impotent visitor.

Patrick James John Eddery may be 46 on the middle day of the Cheltenham Festival, he may be recovering from surgery near his spine, but he is not yet ready for the flower seeds and Horlicks. His back is not a problem. It never has been. He likes putting it into things.

Sir Gordon Richards may be

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON

the only other man to ride 4,000 winners in Britain still has plenty of fuel to throw on the fire. Eddery, in fact, spent most of 1997 with coalman's back following a cloudy day in April. "I rode this horse for Reg Hollinshead at Nottingham and he won easily, but right at the end of the race he jinked, the sort of thing that thousands of horses have done with me, the sort of thing that happens every day," Eddery said. "But I felt a slight twinge. The next day I rode another winner for Richard [Hannon] and it was worse and I knew something was wrong."

The problem was a slipped disc that was pinching his spine, an injury which left him intermittently with a locked back and numbness in his legs. As he was partnering plenty of winners, Eddery ignored medical advice and rode through the discomfort and most of the season. However, after Silver Patriarch's victory in the St Leger, the 4,000th of the rider's career, Mother Nature's stabbing with the knitting needle became too much and Eddery agreed to an operation. "I was a bit worried

about the operation.

Sherwood knows how good Him Of Praise is but the handicapper has yet to find out

Last season Him Of Praise did nothing but disappoint Oliver Sherwood. This campaign is quite the opposite. The eight-year-old goes into the Mildmay-Cazzalet Memorial Chase at Sandown today on a five-timer and with talk of him being the ideal conveyance for Aintree in April. It is not an eventuality his trainer previously imagined.

"Last year he just didn't fire and he disappointed me," Sherwood said yesterday. "He had only three runs and always coughed after working. We

scoped and blood-tested him more times than we had hot dinners but couldn't find anything.

"This year he's come back to form and he's much more interested. As a result of all that he was well-handicapped at the start of the year. He does nothing in front and it always looks like hard work. He's only ever going to win his races by three or four lengths so he looks after his own handicap mark."

A measure of just how well

Him Of Praise (next best 3.10) is treated can be drawn from his



Eddery: 'Never once did I think of retirement. Riding horses is what I do'

Photograph: Robert Hallam

the accelerator on the floor or not get into the vehicle at all, and dismisses Frankie Dettori's intention to cherry pick his rides this season. "That's all part of the game, going to the Folkestones and the smaller tracks, because it's not Royal Ascot every day," Eddery said. "It's ridiculous what Frankie is thinking of doing, you can't just get on the winning rides all the time, you've got to build up."

"You can't just take days off like Wally Swinburn does sometimes, you've got to be out there every day working those muscles, riding in every race if you want to be at your best. I never take time off unless I have to because it says the wrong things. If I was a trainer and I didn't think the guy was riding at 100 per cent all the time and was motivated I wouldn't put him up."

"Probably the one thing that keeps me going is riding winners. Every one still gives me a kick. There may be more money for a Derby than a seller but that doesn't make you try any harder. A winner is a winner."

Pat Eddery's story began in Dublin, the son of racing folk

who was riding ponies at four and racehorses at eight (that's age and not o'clock). He was initially apprenticed to Seamus McGrath and his first ride, True Time, finished last at the Curragh in August 1967. The leading trainer then was Noel Murless, whose Royal Palace had won the Derby, and some considered that Foinavon had been lucky to win that year's Grand National. Pat Eddery was 15.

Eddery, though, was essentially forged when he enrolled at French Nicholson's Cheltenham jockey academy. "They say one in a thousand make it and the reason I did was because I was lucky and I had good people behind me," the Irishman said. "I owe just about 100 per cent of it to Frenchie, who taught me how to ride and, even more importantly, looked after

me. When you're a young man with a few quid in your pocket for the first time things can go the wrong way and you need someone to grab your collar."

It must be said that Pat has managed to get off the leash a few times to make visits to the tabloids. He cannot, however, have constructed his career on blanmange foundations.

Indeed, the P.J. Eddery

most of us know from the racecourse is the man with the facial emulsion of an Easter Island statue. His ration of smiles is taken up by another weighing-room notable. It's not a game to Pat Eddery. It's business.

There is little rocco about

Eddery. He may not swap ideas with Stephen Hawking either,

but when the prototype for a riding machine was developed it was he that was placed on a

podium from which he has yet to slip.

There exists, Eddery believes,

only a handful of jockeys who do

thunderously well out of racing,

enough to go round a generous

driving aisle.

They get the steaming

roasts and fun wines, while

others try to pull the chairs

away. They're a great bunch of

lads in the weighing room at

the moment and good riders, too

— it's not like France where they're

so boring — but there are only

about six or seven riders who

pick up all the best rides," he

said. "They make a really good

living out of the game and they've

got to stay with them and he

someone who is guaranteed a

ride in every race because once

you slip from there you'll never

get back. There are plenty of

young, hungry jockeys waiting to

take your place."

If Eddery can avoid mishaps

of his own he should pass the

4,493 career total of Lester

Piggott, who established himself

in the common mind as the

greatest jockey of the age. What

does that make Pat Eddery?

This is a basic instinct which

has driven the rider for almost

50 years. It will do again after

he has been on a skiing holiday

and to Barbados and will

carry him past one of the few remaining milestones on his road.

Eddery says he will ride not

much further than his 50th birth-

day, by which time he should be

in the proximity of a legend, an-

other man with 11 jockeys'

championships to his name.

"Lester was out of the saddle for

a hit while he was training and

then when he had that mishap

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Avoiding many of the sheep droppings, I perform desultory stretching exercises



MIKE
ROWBOTTOM
ON RUNNING
TOWARDS
CALMNESS

The style is the man, they say. And my running style, if such it can be termed, is a master of low arms and patterning footsteps. It creates a false impression of ease; you might call it grace under no pressure.

Now a combination of age, sloth and family life has curtailed my foottballing there isn't a pressing need for me to keep fit – although I do have this long-term project on the go concerning the avoidance of mortality.

I consult no timepiece on my outings. And until they fell apart recently, I have worn a pair of old Mitre running shoes shunned by my stepson.

Proper runners may now turn the page, or read on with a curling upper lip. But my ex-

cursions into exertion are not without value to me.

Bishop's Stortford, where I have lived for nearly 20 years, is described in older guidebooks as a sleepy market town.

There is still a market on Thursdays and Saturdays where you can buy wickerwork animals, fresh wheats, shell suits – so many things you don't need. But the expansion of Stansted Airport and improved road and rail links with London have engendered large new developments on the town's perimeter.

Meanwhile the town centre, honoured with a Marks and Spencer, a WH Smith and a Pizza Express, has had to devise its own mini-bypass. Not so sleepy town.

There are nevertheless many pleasant ways through this intensely civic place to the compromised fields which surround it.

I have become proprietorial about my favoured route. So come with me now, round our way.

Pause by the house gate for a sniff of night air – same as it ever was. Then down to the main road past All Saints Church, with its silent congregation of graves. The seat built into the lych-gate, a favoured haunt for furtively proud under-age smokers, is empty.

Soon I am on the hedged footpath which runs down to the railway line. Over the bridge – up the steps, pump those arms, easy down the other side – and on into Grange Paddocks.

All the traditional civic features are hereabouts. Ornamental gardens, where pensioners bask on bright days. A war memorial engraved with names that still throng the local telephone directory – Sampford, Sapsford, Thurlestone, Haverford.

Tennis courts, with booking forms hanging up in a hut alongside. A paddling pool: swings; foottball pitches still churned from Sunday morning's action. And Castle Mound, all that remains of what was once a prison for heretics during the Reformation, now futilly fenced off by the council. Warmingly, someone has forced a way through.

Winding through this suburban epitome of Nature Tamed is the River Stort. To run beside the river, sluggish and silted as it may be, is as irresistible as watching waves at the seaside.

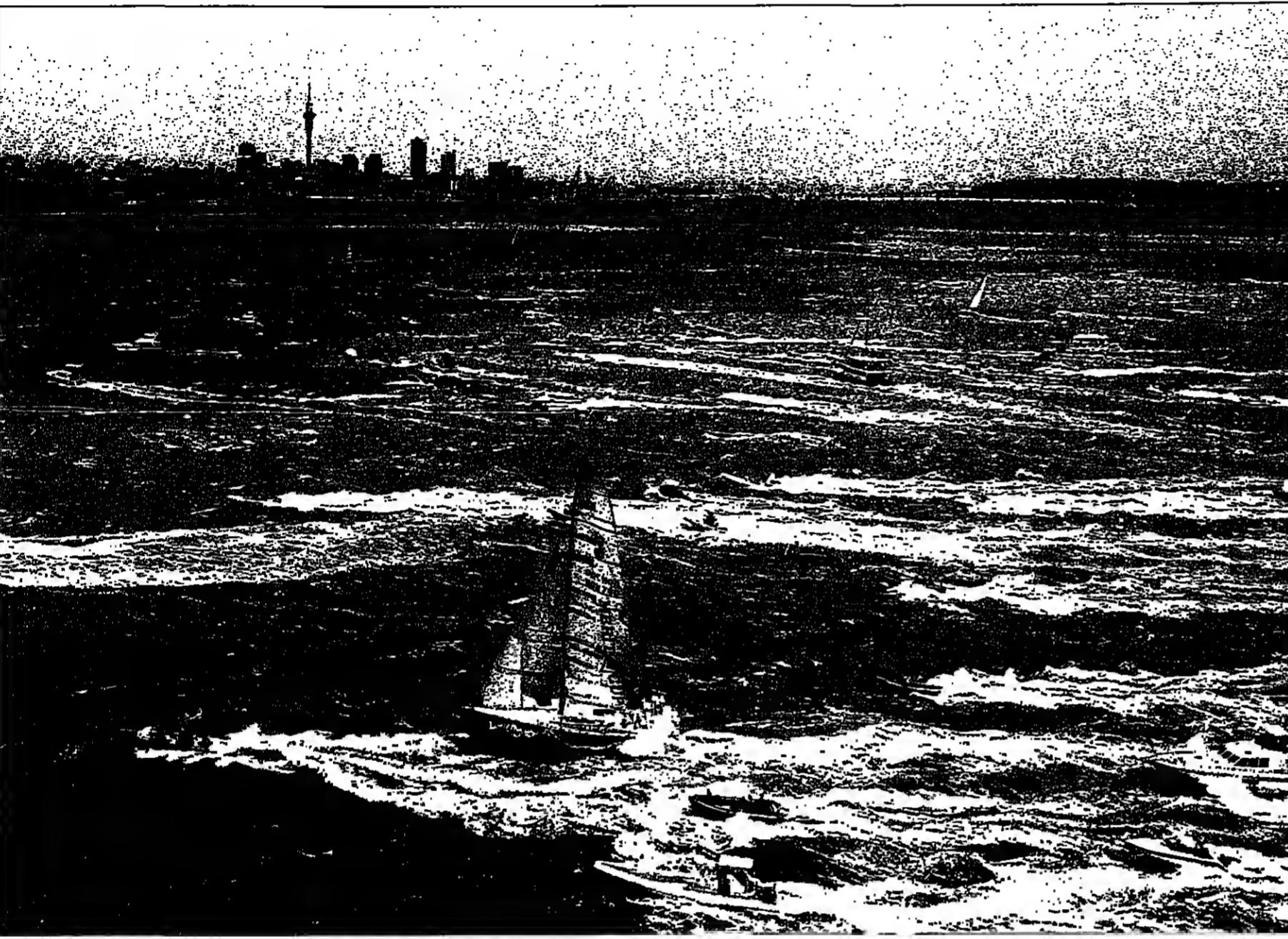
Half-way down my riverside stretch, the track used to diverge around a willow. It always made me think of the Charles Adams cartoon of the skier having gone either side of a tree. Whether I went to the left or the right assumed a kind of wordless significance – but such vagaries have now been expunged following a shift in the line of the path.

On I go, metre after lonely metre, along Rye Street and up Barrellsdown Lane towards the waiting fields.

Justice caught up with her after she'd run a runner to Eastbourne. Here I leave the road and go down a gentle incline past a barley field. Sometimes I access a burst of energy on the way up the other side of this shallow valley.

Now, finally, the high point of the run approaches. I clamber over a stile and make my way to where three oak trees stand close together in a field. I place myself in the middle of them, avoiding as many of the sheep droppings as I can, and perform desultory stretching exercises.

A hundred metres or so away, cars sweep along the bypass; but they only emphasise the sense of solitude. By running to this point, I have earned a measure of calmness. I am concentrating on being exactly here.



Pride of the fleet: Grant Dalton's Merit Cup leads the Whitbread yachts into Auckland yesterday, surrounded by a host of spectator boats

Photograph: Allsport

Our longest day ends in sweet victory



GRANT
DALTON

Merit Cup won the fourth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race in a gripping fight to the finish with Toshiba. At the end of a 1,270-mile ocean sprint, the two boats were only a quarter of a mile apart. Here Merit Cup's triumphant skipper describes the final 24-hour battle to be first from Sydney to Auckland.

The crew was magnificent. There have only been two days like this in my life and the other one was bringing New Zealand Endeavour through the finish line four years ago to win the Fremantle to Auckland leg in the 1993-94 Whitbread. But this time, for a high-pressure final 24 hours, the crew work was really sharp. I don't think they made a single crew error, while towards the end we could see that little mistakes were being made on Toshiba as they perhaps had a little, perhaps realised that, if they could not catch us by then, they weren't going to catch us.

When we reached the northern tip of New Zealand we were thinking more about protecting our third position than expecting to win. Then we saw what we thought was a sophisticated cruising boat sitting offshore with a hi-tech mainsail. There was no way it could be a Whitbread boat as there was no way we could have caught the two boats in front of us.

Then we saw another with a more white sail just ahead, perhaps a sister ship. Then we saw that it was Swedish Match and Toshiba caught in a hole. There was wind on the beach, but even if they could see that they couldn't do anything about it because they had no wind to get across there.

So we got in among the breakers right under the cliffs along the shore, where we wouldn't normally go because normally there isn't any wind there. Chessie Racing and EF Language followed us, with Toshiba wriggling across late behind them. And then started the battle of the windshifts, change after change in wind direction as we worked our way along the shore, always protecting our place on the best side of the course as Chessie and EF kept coming after us.

In that situation Tom Dodson, one of the tactical thinkers in New Zealand's America's Cup winning crew, was masterful. He would take a spot and hold his ground until it came right, choose the most advantageous way to go even if it meant going off course. Without him we wouldn't have won because we would not have mastered the short course tactics in the way he could. And things started to come together. Everything went up a heat.

The boat started to produce real upwind speed in the flatter water. Merit Cup simply took off. We noticed that some of the other boats had very few crew on deck, they were allowing them to take some rest below. We had been in a normal watch system since the start of the leg, as I said we would be, and so had been able to pick up some rest.

But for the last 24 hours, when we moved from thinking we might just protect third place to thinking we might be in with the chance of a win, we had everyone on deck nearly all the time. The helmsmen were given occasional rests. When we could let someone below for an hour or two, we did.

There is nothing like coming down the coast of New Zealand where we know every inch of the route. We hardly need charts at all and we all know the distances between every headland as we counted them down to the entry to Auckland Harbour.

From being the pursuer we became the pursued. I think I prefer to be the pursuer. All the time the wind, coming unusually from the south, built up to 40 knots. That

meant additional worry about damage to the boat as well as fears that the rougher conditions would suit our attackers more than us, because we have a narrower, and therefore less stable, hull.

But the guys were aware this was an important result for us. It repositions the campaign on a more credible platform. It meant we could arrive home in Auckland and hold our heads high as we renewed links with friends and family, instead of having to make excuses. We have done that, and we have moved to see overall.

The boat was generally calm, but my heart was in my mouth right until the moment when we crossed the finish line. And at that point making the last tack, we blew the mainsail. If that had happened just a few minutes earlier it would have cost us victory.

In 1994 we beat Chris Dickson home by two minutes and 38 seconds. This time we have beaten Dennis Conner's Toshiba by two minutes and 36 seconds. We know that this race is still wide open, but no one can take away the boost to our confidence which this win has given us.

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Smith needs a leg up after another limp performance

The cover over the tattered mainsail of Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut was like a purple shroud after what was supposed to be Britain's best shot at a Whitbread Race win in many a long year finished sixth in Auckland yesterday. Along with two fourths and a seventh, the latest result pushed Smith's big-money campaign into seventh place overall.

While saying that he would not make changes, that a run of poor results can be followed by a run of good ones, Smith is facing a dilemma of the kind he does not like. The ques-

tion is how to inject new spark into a crew while remaining true to his first instincts which are to be totally loyal.

However, a turnaround there must be if Smith is to maintain not only the credibility of his Whitbread campaign, but the America's Cup syndicate he hopes will represent Britain here in New Zealand in two years' time.

Smith's mood was not helped by a two-hour limp across the finish line at Orakei Wharf caused by a shack which exploded 12 miles from

home, leaving the headsail to flog it loose and trash the mainsail.

There were no such problems for the overall leader, Paul Cayard, who knew that a middle-order result would consolidate his position. EF Language finished 24 minutes behind the leg-winner Merit Cup, but fourth place keeps Cayard comfortably ahead in the points and ready to put on more pressure in the fifth, 6,670-mile leg round Cape Horn to Brazil.

The only cloud for Cayard was a protest lodged by Toshiba's skipper, Dennis Conner, who accused EF of

failing to show navigation lights at dusk. For the first time in this race, the international jury will have to get in to deliberate.

Free of all worries was Grant Dalton. To be first into his home port after a gripping duel with Toshiba left the 40-year-old skipper's confidence restored and his pride immense. Not that he was alone in feeling considerable satisfaction. The Maryland businessman George Collins was again full of praise for helmsman John Kostecki after a second consecutive third place. Collins knows that he has

a programme good enough to match his commercially sponsored rivals, but like Smith, he also knows that the climb to the top is steep.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (fourth leg, 1,270 miles, Sydney to Auckland): 1 Merit Cup (GB) 2000; 2 EF Language (GB) 2000; 3 Toshiba (US) 2000; 4 EF Language (Swe) 2000; 5 Swedish Match (Swe) 2000; 6 Silk Cut (GB) 2000; 7 Lawrie Smith (GB) 2000; 8 Innovation (Nor) 2000; 9 Brunel (GB) 2000; 10 EF Education (GB) 2000; 11 Chessie Racing (US) 2000; 12 Brumel (GB) 2000; 13 Brumel (GB) 2000; 14 EF Education (GB) 2000; 15 Brumel (GB) 2000; 16 Brumel (GB) 2000; 17 Brumel (GB) 2000; 18 Brumel (GB) 2000; 19 Brumel (GB) 2000; 20 Brumel (GB) 2000; 21 Brumel (GB) 2000; 22 Brumel (GB) 2000; 23 Brumel (GB) 2000; 24 Brumel (GB) 2000; 25 Brumel (GB) 2000; 26 Brumel (GB) 2000; 27 Brumel (GB) 2000; 28 Brumel (GB) 2000; 29 Brumel (GB) 2000; 30 Brumel (GB) 2000; 31 Brumel (GB) 2000; 32 Brumel (GB) 2000; 33 Brumel (GB) 2000; 34 Brumel (GB) 2000; 35 Brumel (GB) 2000; 36 Brumel (GB) 2000; 37 Brumel (GB) 2000; 38 Brumel (GB) 2000; 39 Brumel (GB) 2000; 40 Brumel (GB) 2000; 41 Brumel (GB) 2000; 42 Brumel (GB) 2000; 43 Brumel (GB) 2000; 44 Brumel (GB) 2000; 45 Brumel (GB) 2000; 46 Brumel (GB) 2000; 47 Brumel (GB) 2000; 48 Brumel (GB) 2000; 49 Brumel (GB) 2000; 50 Brumel (GB) 2000; 51 Brumel (GB) 2000; 52 Brumel (GB) 2000; 53 Brumel (GB) 2000; 54 Brumel (GB) 2000; 55 Brumel (GB) 2000; 56 Brumel (GB) 2000; 57 Brumel (GB) 2000; 58 Brumel (GB) 2000; 59 Brumel (GB) 2000; 60 Brumel (GB) 2000; 61 Brumel (GB) 2000; 62 Brumel (GB) 2000; 63 Brumel (GB) 2000; 64 Brumel (GB) 2000; 65 Brumel (GB) 2000; 66 Brumel (GB) 2000; 67 Brumel (GB) 2000; 68 Brumel (GB) 2000; 69 Brumel (GB) 2000; 70 Brumel (GB) 2000; 71 Brumel (GB) 2000; 72 Brumel (GB) 2000; 73 Brumel (GB) 2000; 74 Brumel (GB) 2000; 75 Brumel (GB) 2000; 76 Brumel (GB) 2000; 77 Brumel (GB) 2000; 78 Brumel (GB) 2000; 79 Brumel (GB) 2000; 80 Brumel (GB) 2000; 81 Brumel (GB) 2000; 82 Brumel (GB) 2000; 83 Brumel (GB) 2000; 84 Brumel (GB) 2000; 85 Brumel (GB) 2000; 86 Brumel (GB) 2000; 87 Brumel (GB) 2000; 88 Brumel (GB) 2000; 89 Brumel (GB) 2000; 90 Brumel (GB) 2000; 91 Brumel (GB) 2000; 92 Brumel (GB) 2000; 93 Brumel (GB) 2000; 94 Brumel (GB) 2000; 95 Brumel (GB) 2000; 96 Brumel (GB) 2000; 97 Brumel (GB) 2000; 98 Brumel (GB) 2000; 99 Brumel (GB) 2000; 100 Brumel (GB) 2000; 101 Brumel (GB) 2000; 102 Brumel (GB) 2000; 103 Brumel (GB) 2000; 104 Brumel (GB) 2000; 105 Brumel (GB) 2000; 106 Brumel (GB) 2000; 107 Brumel (GB) 2000; 108 Brumel (GB) 2000; 109 Brumel (GB) 2000; 110 Brumel (GB) 2000; 111 Brumel (GB) 2000; 112 Brumel (GB) 2000; 113 Brumel (GB) 2000; 114 Brumel (GB) 2000; 115 Brumel (GB) 2000; 116 Brumel (GB) 2000; 117 Brumel (GB) 2000; 118 Brumel (GB) 2000; 119 Brumel (GB) 2000; 120 Brumel (GB) 2000; 121 Brumel (GB) 2000; 122 Brumel (GB) 2000; 123 Brumel (GB) 2000; 124 Brumel (GB) 2000; 125 Brumel (GB) 2000; 126 Brumel (GB) 2000; 127 Brumel (GB) 2000; 128 Brumel (GB) 2000; 129 Brumel (GB) 2000; 130 Brumel (GB) 2000; 131 Brumel (GB) 2000; 132 Brumel (GB) 2000; 133 Brumel (GB) 2000; 134 Brumel (GB) 2000; 135 Brumel (GB) 2000; 136 Brumel (GB) 2000; 137 Brumel (GB) 2000; 138 Brumel (GB) 2000; 139 Brumel (GB) 2000; 140 Brumel (GB) 2000; 141 Brumel (GB) 2000; 142 Brumel (GB) 2000; 143 Brumel (GB) 2000; 144 Brumel (GB) 2000; 145 Brumel (GB) 2000; 146 Brumel (GB) 2000; 147 Brumel (GB) 2000; 148 Brumel (GB) 2000; 149 Brumel (GB) 2000; 150 Brumel (GB) 2000; 151 Brumel (GB) 2000; 152 Brumel (GB) 2000; 153 Brumel (GB) 2000; 154 Brumel (GB) 2000; 155 Brumel (GB) 2000; 156 Brumel (GB) 2000; 157 Brumel (GB) 2000; 158 Brumel (GB) 2000; 159 Brumel (GB) 2000; 160 Brumel (GB) 2000; 161 Brumel (GB) 2000; 162 Brumel (GB) 2000; 163 Brumel (GB) 2000; 164 Brumel (GB) 2000; 165 Brumel (GB) 2000; 166 Brumel (GB) 2000; 167 Brumel (GB) 2000; 168 Brumel (GB) 2000; 169 Brumel (GB) 2000; 170 Brumel (GB) 2000; 171 Brumel (GB) 2000; 172 Brumel (GB) 2000; 173 Brumel (GB) 2000; 174 Brumel (GB) 2000; 175 Brumel (GB) 2000; 176 Brumel (GB) 2000; 177 Brumel (GB) 2000; 178 Brumel (GB) 2000; 179 Brumel (GB) 2000; 180 Brumel (GB) 2000; 181 Brumel (GB) 2000; 182 Brumel (GB) 2000; 183 Brumel (GB) 2000; 184 Brumel (GB) 2000; 185 Brumel (GB) 2000; 186 Brumel (GB) 2000; 187 Brumel (GB) 2000; 188 Brumel (GB) 2000; 189 Brumel (GB) 2000; 190 Brumel (GB) 2000; 191 Brumel (GB) 2000; 192 Brumel (GB) 2000; 193 Brumel (GB) 2000; 194 Brumel (GB) 2000; 195 Brumel (GB) 2000; 196 Brumel (GB) 2000; 197 Brumel (GB) 2000; 198 Brumel (GB) 2000; 199 Brumel

Incredible flight offer: Europe from £34 return

easyJet

The Independent and Independent on Sunday, in association with easyJet are offering readers the chance to fly to Europe from an incredible £34 return or £22 one way (all prices include airport tax).

This offer is available all summer long between 21 February and 4 September 1998. Choose from Barcelona, Nice, Amsterdam, Geneva or Palma and in Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Inverness. Flights to all destinations are from London Luton, while you can also travel to Nice and Amsterdam from Liverpool airport as well.

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The prices for travel are divided into three bands - travel between February 21st and March 28th are one band, while travel between March 29th and September 4th is divided into peak and off peak travel. If you want to travel off peak then use the grid to advise you of the best times to fly.

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Day of travel	London Luton to Edinburgh	Edinburgh to London Luton	London Luton to Glasgow
Fri-N	0715 0625	1015 0635 0730	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 0625 0935	1015 0645 1000	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 1515 1825	1015 0655 1110	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	1825 1840	1015 1645 1755	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	2100 2210	1024 2000 2110	0715 0625
Saturday	0620 0935	0635 0750	0715 0625
Saturday	1715 1825	1005 1110	0715 0625
Saturday	2025 2130	1045 1355	0715 0625
Sunday	1050 1205	0805 1020	0715 0625
Sunday	1405 1520	0830 1225 1335	0715 0625
Sunday	1725 1835	1045 1540 1655	0715 0625
Sunday	2035 2145	1045 1855 2005	0715 0625

LONDON LUTON		GLASGOW	
Day of travel	London Luton to Glasgow	Glasgow to London Luton	London Luton to London Luton
Fri-N	0715 0625	0715 0625	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 0625 0935	0715 0625	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 1515 1825	0715 0625	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	1825 1840	0715 0625	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	2100 2210	0715 0625	0715 0625
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Saturday	1715 1825	0715 0625	0715 0625
Saturday	2025 2130	0715 0625	0715 0625
Sunday	1050 1205	0805 1020	0715 0625
Sunday	1405 1520	0830 1020	0715 0625
Sunday	1725 1835	1045 1540 1655	0715 0625
Sunday	2035 2145	1045 1855 2005	0715 0625

LONDON LUTON		ABERDEEN	
Day of travel	London Luton to Aberdeen	Aberdeen to London Luton	London Luton to London Luton
Fri-N	0715 0625	1015 0635 0730	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 0625 0935	1015 0645 1000	0715 0625
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Saturday	0620 0935	0635 0750	0715 0625
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Sunday	1050 1205	0805 1020	0715 0625
Sunday	1405 1520	0830 1020	0715 0625
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Sunday	2035 2145	1045 1855 2005	0715 0625

LONDON LUTON		EDINBURGH	
Day of travel	London Luton to Edinburgh	Edinburgh to London Luton	London Luton to London Luton
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Sunday	2035 2145	1045 1855 2005	0715 0625

LONDON LUTON		GLASGOW	
Day of travel	London Luton to Glasgow	Glasgow to London Luton	London Luton to London Luton
Fri-N	0715 0625	1015 0635 0730	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 0625 0935	1015 0645 1000	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	0715 1515 1825	1015 0655 1110	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	1825 1840	1015 1645 1755	0715 0625
Mon-Fri	2100 2210	1024 2000 2110	0715 0625
Saturday	0620 0935	0635 0750	0715 0625
Saturday	1715 1825	1005 1110	0715 0625
Saturday	2025 2130	0645 1355	0715 0625
Sunday	1050 1205	0805 1020	0715 0625
Sunday	1405 1520	0830 1020	0715 0625
Sunday	1725 1835	1045 1540 1655	0715 0625
Sunday	2035 2145	1045 1855 2005	0715 0625

LONDON LUTON		EDINBURGH	
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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

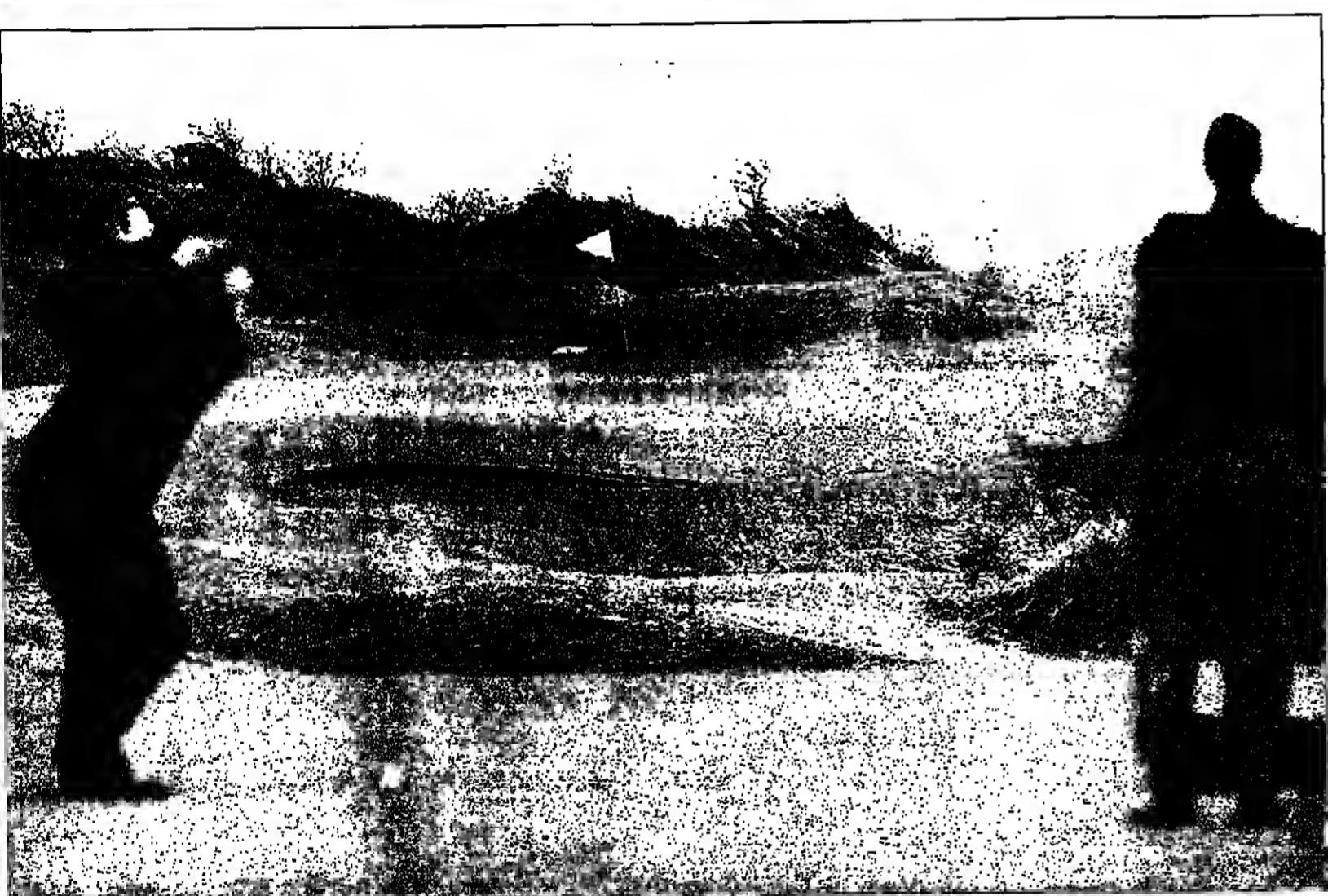
1. To qualify for flights under this promotion readers must collect 12 differently numbered tokens from those printed in The Independent and the Independent on Sunday.

2. There are 50,000 seats available and they will be sold on a first come first served basis. Bookings are made subject

18/PHOTO-SHOOT



Amateurs fly the flag



The official history of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society, recently published, is subtitled "100 years of serious fun". It depends what you mean by fun. This week's tornado would have been right up their fairway. The old Oxbridge Blues have been battling the elements in the President's Putter at Rye in the first week of the New Year for more than 70 years. This year, play started on Tuesday and the final takes place tomorrow.

Never cancelled in peacetime, the event sometimes has to be postponed, as the latter stages were last year, and was once moved to Littlestone in 1963. They fly in from all over the world to delight in donning two bobble hats and as many sweaters as can be worn without hindering the swing completely, and are never happier than when the flagstick attains a horizontal position.

Long gone are the days when some of the finest amateur players in the country were eligible to compete, but the former England cricket captain Ted Dexter is a past champion. "We must be mad to be out here thinking we are enjoying ourselves," he said last year, slightly letting down the side.

Part of the attraction, of course, is recovering afterwards in the Rye clubhouse, a wonderful example of the traditional type. A concession has had to be made for the only woman to have played in the Varsity Match to be allowed into the gentlemen's bar, but it has not bothered Fiona McDonald. A few years ago, as an honorary male for the week, she ended up marrying a fellow Light Blue.

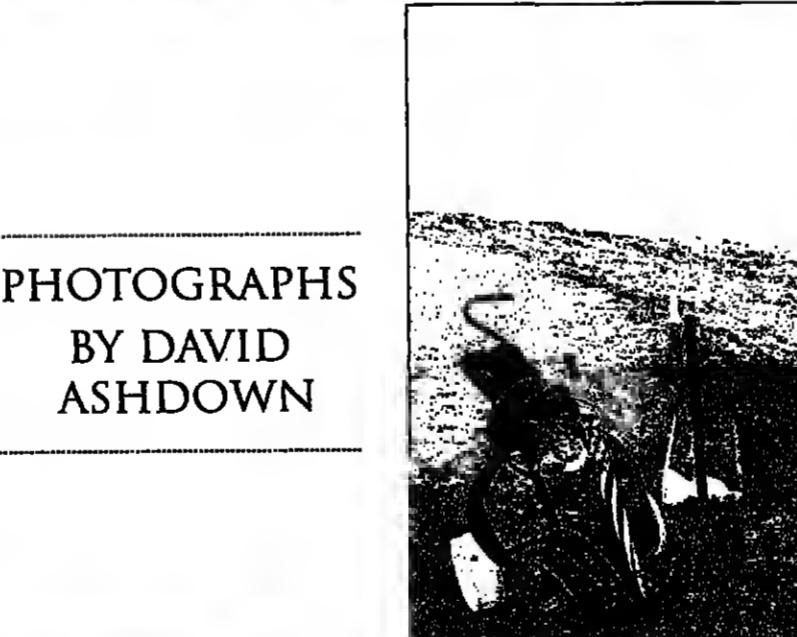
— Andy Farrell



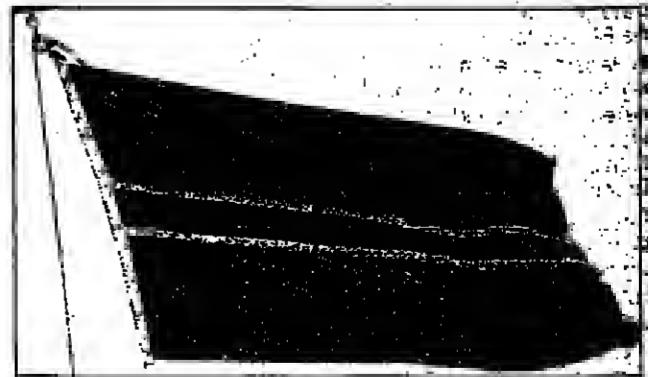
PHOTOGRAPHS
BY DAVID
ASHDOWN



Pictures hanging in the clubhouse of the first President's Putter to be played at Rye, on 28 March 1911



The ball used by each year's winner is hung from putters artistically, if somewhat oddly, displayed in the clubhouse (left). The flag of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society flies in a typical breeze over the clubhouse (right)



■ Copies of these photographs — and any others by the Independent's sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam — can be ordered by telephoning 0171-293 2534.

Woody recruit

De Woodward says he has his England squads in form — a commodity Jeremy Guscott is seriously short of, thanks to back problems that have prevented him playing this season. For that, the Bath field centre is in the line for next month's Nations' opener against France. A good job says Guscott.

London's new manager, Steve Coppell, is looking for a new striker. The former England captain is in the market for a second striker, and has been linked with a move to West Ham. The club has been looking for a new striker for some time, and has been linked with a move to West Ham.

High confidence little spat' with

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High confidence little spat' with

Bullimore plays himself as nightmare scenario sees Bruce Willis meet The X Files



CHRIS
MAUME
SPORT
ON TV

Think about it. You've spent a couple of days lying on a shelf in the hull of your capsized yacht, 1,300 miles south of Australia, on that bit of the map where the first cartographers used to write, "here be dragons". You've got frostbite, the skyscraper waves are starting up again, and you've eaten the bit of chocolate you had. Things can't get any worse.

Until you go to check on the life raft. You try to push your way through the cabin door, which swings back on your hand. You watch the top of your little finger float away then get back on your shelf and wait to die.

You will probably recognise this as the scenario played out by Tony Bullimore a year ago, when his boat turned over during the Vendée Globe race, reconstructed in *Miracle at Sea*:

The Rescue of Tony Bullimore (ITV). And there lies the problem. Once I saw the words "This programme uses reconstructed scenes", all I could think about was how it was made, and how well Bullimore was playing himself. During the action sequences in the hull of the *Exide Challenger*, it was all a bit Bruce Willis, and the question arose, where on earth were they filming this? Presumably in one of those big film studio tanks.

At one point it was less Bruce Willis than *The X Files*, when Bullimore's wife, Lal, (whose bedside prayers in the dark were kindly reconstructed for us) had a mystical experience: "I talked to him and then he answered. I saw him on the shelf. I don't know whether you want to call it madness or

not." Meanwhile, Bullimore, too, was talking to the skipper upstairs. "I had a vision, I went back through time and space to get help, to an ancient place. There were people sitting and talking. One of them said, 'Keep going. You'll get there, you'll get there.'

Fortunately, there were five spotter planes and the HMAS *Adelaide* on hand as well.

A more down-to-earth note was struck by Lal, when news of her husband's rescue came through. "I opened a bottle of champagne, and that went very quickly. And then I saw some brandy and I opened that as well. And then I saw some Bacardi and I opened that as well." And then she went upstairs to deliver some tipsy prayers of thanks.

Prayers would be the only

rational response if you found yourself hurtling down a slope at around 60mph before launching into space. It was frightening enough watching it on *Ski Sunday*. Perhaps because it evoked memories of dreams of flying and falling. I find sky jumping an utterly compelling event (I speak solely as a viewer, of course), and BBC2's coverage covers all the angles – including one virtually up the jumper's bum as he glides through the emptiness and heads for terra firma.

I tuned into *Ski Sunday* by way of limbering up for next month's Winter Olympics, and with a similar idea in mind – preparing for Super Bowl – I renewed my nodding-off acquaintance with *American Football Big Match* (C4).

When C4 first put on grid-

iron, it had a certain novelty value, which admittedly wore off rapidly. However, time away has increased the appetite for extreme physical violence and obscure jargon, although the same things as before are still irritating – the stop-start nature of it, and the collective orgasm that shudders through the stadium when a gain of half a yard is made.

The aggression is compelling, though. One hit the previous week, we were told, had resulted in a player biting on, was like slipping into the soft leather seats of some luxurious motor, a Morse-type Jag or an Austin Princess.

Speaking of dangerous sports, with ITV back in the FA Cup, there's an incentive to watch Bob Wilson negotiate the perils of a sentence without getting completely lost. As lost as

Bullimore, in fact, but without the Australian military to come to his rescue.

Matters weren't helped last Sunday by the fact that in the wake of the Skye-up delights on show at Chelsea earlier in the day, the Everton v Newcastle game felt like crumbs from the high table.

ITV has always suffered by comparison with the opposition, though. It's difficult to pin it down, but that *Match of the Day* feeling, as the music came on, was like slipping into the soft leather seats of some luxuriously motor, a Morse-type Jag or an Austin Princess.

Speaking of dangerous sports, with ITV back in the FA Cup, there's an incentive to watch Bob Wilson negotiate the perils of a sentence without getting completely lost. As lost as

the picture quality was poorer. These days, it's more to do with the quality of the personnel.

Bob Wilson is crap. Jim Rosenthal is crap. Brian Moore is much-loved. And crap. Only Big Ron goes against type, his idiosyncratic turns of phrase raising huffed smiles all round.

Speaking of Rabbits 'n' Headlights Rosenthal, in the early 1980s, when Liverpool used to pop across to Tokyo every now and then for the World Club Championship, his commentary was the subject of an enraged letter from a viewer, the most charitable adjective in which was "narcoleptic".

I felt bad after I'd sent it, thinking how upset he'd be if he got to read it. Nowadays, I do that kind of thing for a living. As my ex-wife used to say to me, "You've changed."

Woodward quickly recruits Guscott

Clive Woodward says he picks his England squads on form – a commodity Jeremy Guscott is seriously short of, thanks to the back problems that have prevented him playing this season. For all that, the Bath midfield centre is in the frame for next month's Five Nations' opener with France. A good job too, says Chris Hewett.

Two draws and two spankings in four outings hardly constitute a dream start for Clive Woodward but there is at least an outside chance that the coach will head for France next month with his dream ticket in midfield. Jeremy Guscott is on the road to recovery – so far down the road,

Pugh confident of resolving 'little spat' with English clubs

The language will not have endeared him to the big-ego business men who run the major clubs in England, but Vernon Pugh is sure that he can sort out the "little spat" over fixtures.

Pugh, the chairman of the International Rugby Board, believes a sensible solution beckons over the boycott of European games, providing the English clubs and European Rugby Cup Limited "show goodwill". The clubs are unhappy with next season's fixtures which deprive them of cash-creating league games for a block of six weeks.

He urged a commonsense approach and dismissed prospects of an Anglo-French tournament taking over as Europe's premier club competition.

"A lot of water needs to run under many bridges before people can seriously talk about an Anglo-French tournament," he said yesterday. "I say, with a degree of confidence, that European rugby will continue much as it is. The situation appears to be nothing more than yet another little spat."

"If the English clubs' real concerns are about the structure, then with goodwill on all sides, there should be no problem re-arranging the schedule. We will sit down and talk."

Cardiff's little spat with the

indeed, that he is back in the Test squad after six months of injury-related inactivity.

Woodward named Guscott yesterday in a 24-man party for next Wednesday's "planning and review" pow-wow at Bisham Abbey and it is possible that he did so more in hope than expectation. Almost the last thing the 32-year-old centre did on a rugby field was chip over the drop goal that won last summer's South African series for the Lions. A week later, he broke his arm in the early stages of the final Test and he subsequently developed career-threatening problems with a disc in his back that required surgery two months ago.

But Guscott himself is beginning to fancy his chances of a comeback, possibly in time for Bath's Heineken Cup final with Brive on 31 January. "Things have gone well recently," he said yesterday. "Bath sent me to

Lanzarote for some warm-weather training and that definitely helped my progress. If things continue in this vein, I hope to play a match within the next couple of weeks."

If Woodward's prayers are answered – the coach has always maintained that a fit Guscott would be among the very first names on his team-sheet – England could march on Paris on 7 February with the old maestro alongside the young pretender, Will Greenwood. They combined thrillingly during the Lions tour.

Woodward also has Mike Catt, another potential centre candidate, and Tim Rodber, the Lions No 8, back after injury.

"We probably won't train next week," the coach said. "It will be more about planning and reviewing – but as far as Jerry is concerned, we want his input whatever his condition."

Rodber leapfrogs the out-of-form Chris Sheasby and joins Neil Back, Richard Hill, Tony Diproso, and the captain, Lawrence Dallaglio, in the back-row equation. There is significant activity in the front row, too, where Andy Long and Will Green, capped against the Wallabies, are ignored. Kevin Yates, the ball-playing loose-head specialist from Bath, is promoted.

Tim Stimpson, a Lion in summer but a bystander in winter, is omitted along with Adeyayo Adebayo, the Bath wing, and John Bentley, who may

soon find a full-time return to rugby league too tempting to resist. There is no room for Tony Underwood, either.

The unluckiest absentee of all is Alex King. The Wasps outside-half was picked to face Australia in November but

withdrew with knee problems. He has worked his way back to fitness and played at something approaching full tilt in the Cup tie against Harlequins last weekend, but Paul Grayson's revelatory form and Catt's recovery from concussion have temporarily slammed the door.

"I am pleased we have a reasonably stable squad," said Woodward, who badly needs a victory in France to lead weight and authority to his radical attacking ideas. "I found the players I wanted during the autumn Tests, but there are also people outside this new squad who could play well for us in Paris. We will take the players in form."

A wake-up call from Leicestershire is not what most teams would like after a long lay-off, but hosts Coventry cannot wait for today's Tetley's Bitter Cup tie to start. The Premiership Two side have not played since 20 December – a 46-8 thumping by Rotherham – but their coach, Derek Eves, believes the break will be beneficial. "Some players were complaining about being jaded, so the rest has been useful," he said.

In the only Premiership One

match Northampton, at home

to Sale, will be seeking their first after failing to cross the opposition line in their last three

League games.

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In the only

Toon Army dreams of absent friend as thrills turn to chills

As the first anniversary of Kevin Keegan's surprising resignation as Newcastle United manager passed this week, Simon Jumbull found the Toon Army still pining for the man they idolised.

against Liverpool. There were still 3,000 unoccupied seats. English football's great entertainers have become the runts of the mill. As Ian Ferguson puts it in the latest edition of *The Mag*, the best-selling Newcastle fanzine: "We have become a team which starts with a 0-0 draw and tries to hang on to it." He adds that if Newcastle United were his girlfriend, "I would have said it was time to split up and move on. For the last three months we've only had one good night to remember and the rest of the time you have just gone out of your way to embarrass me in public and make my life miserable."

It is an apposite analogy. A year ago, in the wake of Kevin Keegan's departure, a German television crew stopped one of the black-and-white-clad locals in Newcastle's Bigg Market and asked: "What will it feel like when your team gets a new manager?" "Like finding your last in bed with another man," he replied.

Next Wednesday, 14 January, it will be a year since the start of the affair between Kenny Dalglish and the Toon Army. It has been a rather curious one. Dalglish has taken Newcastle into the European Cup and to a famous victory against Barcelona. But the fans have yet to take him to their hearts. As "Toon Army Pete" of Whitley Bay put it last week, on the letters page of *The Pink*, the *Evening Chronicle's* sports edition: "Come back, Kevin. All is forgiven."

It is a popular sentiment on Tyneside 12 months after the high-profile changing of the managerial guard at St James' Park. It is hardly surprising, either, given the bumpy manner in which the Magpies have fallen to earth since their 3-2 success

against Barcelona in September. A run of seven League matches without a win has left them on the slide, perched precariously in the bottom half of the Premiership table. The last time Newcastle endured a longer winless streak in one season, the final nine games of the 1988-89 campaign, they slid into the old Second Division.

Dalglish's team line up against Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough this afternoon, 20 points behind Manchester United but just six points ahead of Everton and Spurs. They have 26 points from 19 Premiership games. Sunderland had 23 at the same point last season and no one on Tyneside needs reminding of the fate they suffered on the May day of reckoning.

The prospect of passing Sunderland on the way down to the First Division is too great a nightmare for the Toon Army to contemplate. For the time being, they are simply aggrieved that the perceived dream football of the Keegan era has given way to the stupefying pragmatic.

"You want to know the mood of the fans I!" Dave, one of the restive natives filing out of St James' on Wednesday night, exclaimed. "As if anyone. We're sick of watching football."

You will struggle to find any Newcastle supporters still clinging to the belief that Alan Shearer is the only vital ingredient missing. You will, it must be said, also struggle to find those convinced that Dalglish will come up with a trophy-winning recipe.

Yet it is difficult not to sympathise with the man who is not exactly flavour of the times on Tyneside. Newcastle's form on the North-east playwright Peter Mortimer this week chose to put it, "from Keegan's troubadour into Dalglish's donkeys" is not as black and white as it seems.

Newcastle were not always strutting minstrels when Keegan had the whip hand. They were as grey and lifeless at times as Dalglish's team have undoubtedly been in recent weeks. Indeed, this is the fourth successive term in which Newcastle have been afflicted by mid-season affective disorder.

Three years ago, they suffered the slump that prompted the sale



Maggie moments: Kenny Dalglish (main picture) milks the fans' approval before his first match in charge while (left) one supporter displays his frustration by hurling a Newcastle shirt at Dalglish, whose predecessor, Kevin Keegan (right), shows his frustration in his final days

Photographs: Allsport/The Mirror

of Andy Cole. Two years ago, they lost their 12-point lead at the top of the Premiership. And last season they went seven League games without a victory shortly before Keegan packed his bags.

That latter streak, which matches the current one, has been conveniently overlooked by Dalglish's critics. Newcastle failed to win those games even with Shearer leading their forward line. Keegan knew his side, once again, were not quite championship-winning material.

He had put the bank on Shearer, and tempted fate by parading him at an all-ticket signing ceremony at St James' Park. It was a gamble for which Dalglish has been made to pay.

Keegan left not just because he could see another title chance disappearing, but because of Newcastle's imminent stock exchange flotation. It has been clear from Dalglish's failure to sign adequate striking cover for Shearer and Faustino Asprilla that there has been no bottomless pot of gold like the one into which his predecessor could dip. Keegan never had to skin the free-transfer market for such short-term long shots as Ian Rush and John Barnes.

Dalglish would not have been obliged to do so had he been left a decent depth of reserves. Keegan's decision to remove Newcastle's second team from the Pontins League last season cut off a vital production line and led to the sale of such unemployed assets as Darren Huckerby and Chris Holland.

It ought not to be forgotten, too, that Dalglish reversed Newcastle's form in the second half of last season, guiding them into the qualifying round of the Champions' League with an unbeaten run of 10 games and a 5-0 thumping of Nottingham Forest on the final day. And Newcastle, even without Shearer, looked promisingly like the part in their early games this season, until injuries to Stuart Pearce and Alessandro Pistone punctured their new-found defensive buoyancy.

It remains to be seen whether

irreparable damage has been done to the visions of trophy-winning grandeur that were instilled in Toon Army minds by the bold proclamations of Keegan and Sir John Hall. Dalglish, of course, knows that it is good to talk. It is just as well, given the strong verbal defence that was required for his toughest fixture to date this season: against Jeremy Paxman on Thursday night.

"Now, to the burning question in soccer," the *Newsnight* anchorman said, before launching his smarmy offensives: "Is Kenny Dalglish a big girl's blouse?" There was barely a flicker of response on Dalglish's face, let alone the tell-tale flutter of mascaraed eyelashes. He even rode the charge of managing a "plutocratic side" without dropping his doughty Glaswegian guard or, indeed, stopping to consult his dictionary.

It is, though, a sign of the changed times for the Toon Army that their once-beloved black-and-whites will not be the nation's darlings when Newcastle pay their reluctant visit to Stevenage in the fourth round of the FA Cup. The conquerors of the £400m pride of Catalonia are running scared of the part-time Borough boys of Broadhall Way. There will be few broken hearts if those fears are realised in humble Hertfordshire on 25 January – but not as many as there would have been 12 months ago.

Nichenko has failed to report back to Ferencvaros after a trip home, prompting speculation that he has been conscripted to the Ukrainian military.

The Budapest newspaper *Nepszava* reported on Thursday that the Ukrainian authorities had appreciated the 26-year-old as he renewed his passport in Kiev. It added that the Ukrainian police had been attempting to contact the player for two years.

Nichenko's agent, Sergei Kuznetsov, told another paper, *Nemzeti Sport*, that he believed the player had probably been conscripted.

"We have heard the news, but we have yet to have it officially confirmed," Laszlo Gal, the Ferencvaros technical director, said. "Igor had a problem with his work permit here and went back to Ukraine to sort out his passport."

Nichenko has been one of the most prolific scorers in Hungary during the past three seasons. Two years' military service is, however, compulsory in Ukraine for all adult males under the age of 28.

ISI days... and counting until the World Cup finals begin in France

The Chateau du Montbaurier, the head of the French town of Vise, will have unusual guests this summer. Normally the home of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Patissier (National Pastry School), in June it will become the base of Iran's World Cup squad. It meets several strict requirements regarding the practice of Islam, food and the presence of women, according to Bernard Gallo, the town's deputy mayor. Security was another factor in choosing this chateau near St-Etienne. The United States, who meet Iran in the first round, insisted that the Iranians are located at least 60 miles away. They will be based in Saint-Jean-d'Ardèche, 75 miles away.

Rupert Metcalf

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God's own coach on a mission of mercy for the lad Heckinbottom



THE GAFFER TAPES

We received a postcard at the Old Cornfield this morning from Goa. Nothing strange in that—the office staff are always doing this in the winter, letting us know that while we are struggling around the garden recovering laundry after the gales, or sliding across black ice into the neighbour's MGF, they are sunning themselves on some beach leering at the tanned.

However, this postcard came not from one of our wannabe Shirley Valentines but from Brian Heckinbottom, our blunt instrument of a centre-forward who's supposed to be battering defenders on our behalf this afternoon. In a way it's a relief; at least we know where he is. Ever since the normally reliable Mancunian failed to make training on Monday we've been worried about him.

We checked the obvious—wife, mum, credit card agency, his tab at the Mop & Bucket—and the signs looked bad. All his bills had been paid up to date on Sunday, while both his women had been told he was going away on a club tour. We began to fear he'd jumped into the Sludgebottom Canal and were about to ask the cops to dredge it when the postcard arrived.

It seems he wants to find himself and is considering giving up the game and become a hippy. His failure to make the Jamaican World Cup squad appears to hit him hard. Despite being no more Jamaican than William Hague (wearing a baseball cap at the Notting Hill carnival, having "One Love" on CD, etc) he saw it as his last chance of international football.

It's a savage blow for the club. He, Fritz Unstartz and Ego Massive had struck up a fine partnership up front. Brian would now be the defence into

submission with a well-timed (i.e. when the ball was at the other end) elbow and Fritz and Ego would take advantage.

In desperation we turned to God—well, his right-hand man. Glenn Hoddle is flying out tomorrow. As the FA's counsellor-in-chief he'll be had a responsibility to answer the call. He's going to commune with Brian and try and raise his karma over a kilo (Glenn promised Graham Kelly he won't inhale). Naturally, half a dozen hacks have wangled a trip on expenses to follow the "story" but Glenn's hoping to shake them off.

He's dedicated and, if he has to, he's prepared to bring Brian into the England squad to lure him back. This is a great gesture, but we're hoping he doesn't actually have to pick him as that means we'll have to pay Whippet Athletic, his former club, an extra £250,000 as part of the transfer deal.

In the meantime I'm following up a lead from Ego about a hard-man striker he knows in Central America called Che Revola. Apparently Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus have all been trailing him but there are complications, so we may be able to nip in.

On the credit side the work permit for Swetie Bettie, Fritz's personal tea lady, has come through so Fritz is staying. The Ministry of Employment had been dealing with some Swiss PE teacher but they dropped everything when Swetie made her personal approach. They obviously liked her as she's also got permission to do some modelling, and she had a picture shoot yesterday for the *The Moon*'s page-three brew-up. I think she could be a good signing, especially as she's agreed to service the ref at home games as well as Fritz.

Meanwhile we were on the wrong end of a shock in last week's FA Cup, winning 3-0 away to another Premiership side. Shaun Prone scored a hat-trick with all three goals set up by Ivor Niggle. This opened up all manner of fourth-round nightmares, but we've managed to avoid Stevenage, or the prospect of playing Hereford or Cheltenham. Instead we've drawn a respectable First Division team away from home, the sort you can lose to without disgrace.

But it's back to the league this week and, typically, the Prone-Niggle partnership is back in the sick room. Prone's got a swollen head while Niggle has a punctured ego after the chairman turned down his request for a bonus with the response that he "wouldn't get a bean until he went a month without injury".

Berry Gaffer was talking to
Glen Moore

Kendall slates Spurs over transfer rebuff

Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, has criticised Tottenham following the collapse of Andy Hinchliffe's £3m move to White Hart Lane. The England international was sent back to Goodison Park on Thursday after it was revealed he is suffering from an Achilles injury.

"The whole affair has been like an Brian Rix farce," Kendall said. "The way things have been conducted is not at all professional. Having gone so far down the road to signing the player, to pull out just because he may possibly be unavailable for one match is absolute nonsense."

Everton are incensed with suggestions from Spurs that they

deceived the Londoners over Hinchliffe's fitness amid claims that an extra payment on the fee had been agreed as long as Hinchliffe was not cup-tied by playing for Everton last weekend against Newcastle. Spurs pulled back from the deal because they wanted Hinchliffe to play for them at Manchester United today, claiming he would not have been fit. Everton denied knowledge of any such arrangement.

As Christian Gross's shopping expedition continues, Juventus's Portuguese left-back, Manuel Dimas, is the Tottenham manager's latest quarry. Spurs have approached the Italians with an offer for the 28-year-old de- fender and were close to agreeing a £2m deal.

Dimas, who joined Juventus from Benfica a year ago, played for Juve in the opening Champions' League qualifiers, but was then left out of the side when Mauroen Torricelli returned from injury.

Ruud Gullit has rounded on his Norwegian goalkeeper, Frode Grodas. Despite winning an FA Cup winner's medal in May, the 33-year-old has not even been on the bench this season. "I told him at the beginning of the season that I wasn't happy with him," the Chelsea manager said. The club has put Grodas up for sale, but have received no offers.

"It's not our fault," Gullit said. "Nobody wants him. That says something about how he played last season. You'll have to ask him why he's staying. Maybe it's the money. If he doesn't want to go, we can't do anything."

Another goalkeeper with problems is Bernard Lama, who may be on his way out of Upton Park without playing a game for West Ham. The French goalkeeper needs first team football to enhance his chances of making the France World Cup squad, but manager Harry Redknapp refuses to drop the injured Craig Forrest. Lama could well look elsewhere, and Redknapp said, "I don't know how long he'll stay if he doesn't play."

— Alan Nixon

Keane out for rest of the season

Roy Keane will not return this season for Manchester United even though he is recovering well from his knee injury. The Republic of Ireland midfielder has been swimming and cycling to build up the strength in his injured knee following his cruciate ligament operation last year.

This week Keane began jogging for the first time since he suffered the injury, against Leeds in September.

The United manager, Alex Ferguson, confirmed that the 26-year-old was making good progress, but said he would not be rushed back. Keane is due to begin full training in

SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Ferry prepared to punish Gascoigne

Jim Ferry, the Scottish Football Association chief executive, has given the strongest indication yet that Paul Gascoigne could still be punished for his flute-playing antics.

Gascoigne was caught on camera impersonating a flute player as he warmed up during the second half at the Old Firm game on New Years Day.

Ferry is threatening to discipline Rangers and the England midfielder unless the Scottish champions take appropriate action. He also suggests the club

should make the punishment public.

"Gascoigne's action was unprofessional and inflammatory," Ferry said. "Having been down this road before I wonder to what extent the association's signals to clubs and players have been heeded. If necessary then I am in no doubt that the association will bring this message home graphically."

Michael O'Neill is ready to make his debut for Aberdeen at Ibrox today after the Northern Ireland midfielder came through a reserve match on Wednesday unscathed.

O'Neill joined the Dons on a three-month loan deal from Coventry last week but was unable to play because his clearance had not been received in time.

Dunfermline face bottom club Hibernian at Easter Road without a win since the middle of November but their assistant manager, Dick Campbell, remains optimistic. "We know that a couple of wins will send us back up the table and that is what we are striving for," he said.

The long-running saga of Emerson's future at Middlesbrough took a new turn yesterday when Bryan Robson, his manager, said there was no truth in a report that his Brazilian midfielder had signed for Fiorentina.

Robson said the report was "absolute rubbish." Emerson has been fined and dropped by the First Division leaders after returning late from a Christmas holiday in Brazil while he was serving a suspension.

Middlesbrough face a tough test of their promotion credentials today when they travel to Charlton, who have climbed to fourth in the table. Clayton Blackmore, who missed the first half of the season with a stress fracture, is pushing for a place in Middlesbrough's line-up. Gianni Festa is suspended. Kit Symons, who lost the captaincy

a month ago, Kevin Horlock and Anthony Ormerod returns after recovering from groin trouble.

Charlton must decide whether to play Bradley Allen or Mark Bright following Carl Leach's move to Wimbledon. Matt Holmes has recovered from injury but lacks match fitness and will be a substitute.

Nottingham Forest, in second place, welcome back Pierre Van Hooijdonk, Steve Stone and Andy Johnson for the visit of Port Vale. Jon Hjelde is out with a hamstring strain and Colin Cooper reverts to centre-back. The Port Vale full-back Matt Carragher has been ruled out after suffering a recurrence of a stomach strain.

Frank Clark could hand the captain's armband for today's match at Portsmouth to his former Pompey player, Kit Symons, who lost the captaincy

a month ago. Kevin Horlock and Gerard Winkens have been injured while in charge. Richard Edghill is in contention to reclaim his right-back place after serving out his suspension. Adrian Whitbread and David Hillier are fit again for Portsmouth.

Sunderland will name an unchanged team for the ninth time in succession as they look to avenge their defeat on the opening day of the season at Bramall Lane. Sheffield United's Norwegian striker, Jan Age Fjortoft, is battling to recover from tonsillitis, while defender David Holdsworth has missed training all week with a groin strain.

Bryan Gunn is set to make his first appearance of the season for Norwich at Wolves, who are without the suspended Steve Sedgley and Paul Simpson. Don Goodman is fit again. As part of the agreement, Cole did not play in the first match after his transfer against Newcastle at St James' Park. The game ended 1-1 and was significant also for the knee injury to Mark Hughes. Cole's move seemed likely to spell the end at Old Trafford for Hughes, but his transfer to Everton was halted by the injury.

In the Coca-Cola Cup quarter-finalists Liverpool beat Arsenal 1-0—who that week paid Luton £2m for John Hartson.

The meeting at the Goldstone Ground ended in a 1-1 draw while Brighton won 2-1 in Wales.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

Transfers

Free transfers or undisclosed fees unless stated

£100,000

£200,000

£300,000

£400,000

£500,000

£600,000

£700,000

£800,000

£900,000

£1,000,000

£1,500,000

£2,000,000

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£3,000,000

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Tottenham's taskmaster? It's all a Gross distortion

In seven weeks in charge of Tottenham Christian Gross has seen his team slide into the relegation zone while losing an average of three goals and two players per game. His chosen assistant has had a work permit rejected, the players have whispered revolt and, this week, two transfers failed.

All this and today Spurs visit Manchester United. It is enough to depress anybody, but Glenn Moore found the enigmatic Swiss manager bold and buoyant.

Ten days ago Christian Gross stood on Westminster Bridge and contemplated the future. No, he was not considering jumping off it, he was seeing in the New Year.

The annual siege of Trafalgar Square is a very English tradition which few Premiership managers would contemplate and those Spurs fans who saw their manager must have dismissed it, when they eventually surfaced the following day, as a booze-fuelled hallucination. It was not and the incident encapsulates the enigmatic nature of Tottenham's new Swiss manager.

He arrived with a reputation as a hard taskmaster, an image which grew after alleged complaints by players about having to train when injured and the sight of him barking out orders, usually it seems, "work, work harder" on the touchline.

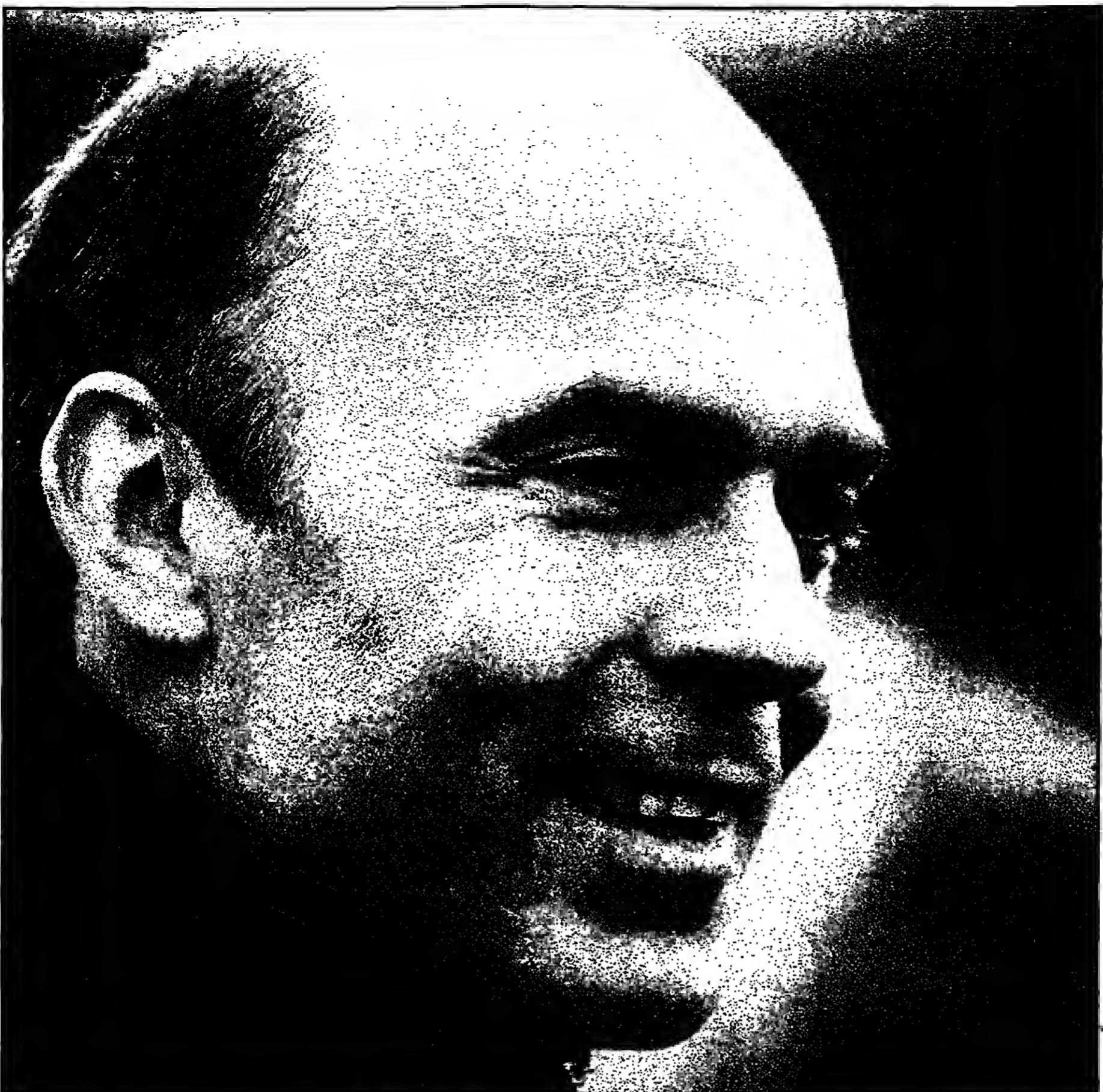
But if you spend time with him, another Gross emerges. This one wants to take the team to the circus next week - risking all manner of jokes at the expense of his defence - and raves about seeing M-People in concert. He is also, however, very committed to improving the Tottenham team and very confident of his ability to do so.

"There have been no real surprises for me," he said when we met on Thursday. "I knew when I signed the contract it would be a big challenge for me."

We are sitting in the Portakabin which Spurs use for press conferences while their Chigwell training centre is being extended. There are grilles on the windows and a spartan air about the prefab which shortly before Christmas played host to a consignment of frozen turkeys (no, not the players). This can hardly be what he expected when he came to "the world famous Tottenham".

Earlier in the day Nicola Berti was signed, but Andy Hinchcliffe did not while negotiations on Valencia's Moussa Saib have been postponed. In addition three players have been passed fit for today's trip to Old Trafford but two more ruled out. In seven matches Gross has suffered 13 injuries to 10 different players.

"There is a lack of constants, also in our performances," he said. "Over six weeks we never have the same team, it is hard daily work bringing it together with a new team all the time. We have excellent



Happy here: 'I said those things as I wanted to get things moving' Gross says of the recent headlines. 'But I will not be leaving Spurs'

Photograph: Philip Meech

individuals but we are not a team. "We are working hard on this. Everybody needs leaders, now we have Jürgen [Klinsmann] and I also expect Les [Ferdinand] to be a leader, with his experience, class and strength, but he is often injured."

He is not alone which underlines the need for Fritz Schmid, Gross's assistant and fitness conditioner from Grasshoppers Zurich. A fortnight ago Gross suggested he would resign if Schmid failed to get a work permit but now he says that even if the appeal fails he will stay.

"I said those things as I wanted to get things moving and show Fritz

I was behind him. But I know it was Switzerland's decision not to be in the EC. Fritz is important, if I have to do a special physical session I need a specialist, but I will not be leaving Spurs."

When the furore was at its peak the Swiss FA made it clear they wanted Gross to be national coach but he said: "It is a great challenge for a Swiss coach to coach the national team but for my career, at my age [43], it is better to take a club abroad. I am happy with the situation. I am representing Switzerland. There is a lot of responsibility on my shoulders to do that."

One reason he would like to share that responsibility with Schmid is that, "I only want to work with 100 per cent fit players. I never force a player to train with injury. I expect them to tell me, 'I am not 100 per cent today' if they are injured. They have a big responsibility towards themselves and the club. I can't imagine they went to the papers but I know papers want to make their stories."

The revolt over training does not appear to widespread and having the likes of Berti and Klinsmann, hard-working players of international repute, can only strengthen Gross's position. Not that he claims to be the

hard man his reputation suggests. He certainly seems astonished when I tell him Brian Clough was notorious for inspiring his players through fear.

"I want to convince players my way is successful, not scare them. It takes time to learn about one another." There is an undercurrent of frustration, however, when he adds: "They have a special profession and I am not sure every player realises this. It is an excellent profession. A lot of players can't compare themselves with life outside soccer."

Gross, 43, was a respectable player himself in Switzerland and the Bundesliga where he played for

Bochum. He was described by one German observer as a midfielder with good vision, but overweight which makes his emphasis on fitness ironic. As a coach he has a good reputation in Germany where the reaction to his appointment at White Hart Lane was not "Christian Who?" but "good choice".

He almost played at White Hart Lane as a teenager but was injured when they met in the 1973-74 UEFA Cup. Always keen on coaching he began at Will, a Swiss Third Division club, before progressing to Grasshopper Zurich where he won two championships and the Swiss Cup. Gross

cites Helmut Johannsen, a *Bundesliga* title-winner with Eintracht Brunswick in 1967, and later his coach at Bochum, as a key influence along with the Austrian Ernst Happel, who coached the Netherlands, and the Italians Giovanni Trapattoni, Arrigo Sacchi and Fabio Capello.

These last names would suggest a belief in the pressing game, not quite the glory, glory game of Tottenham tradition but potentially attractive, as the Milan of Gullit and company demonstrated.

"I want my teams to play with pressure and I want them to control the game. I hate it when we have to react but there are a lot of strong teams here. The Premiership is very equal. The pace and power of the English game has impressed me. From the kick-off there is a 100 per cent tempo. Sometimes it is too fast, you must be able to control the ball, but there is always a lot of pressure on the pitch. The crowd demands it, I like the passion here but they do not like the ball being passed back."

"My ideal team is Manchester. They are outstanding, one of the best in Europe, maybe the world. They are my European Cup favourites and should have won last year."

He means, of course, Manchester United. It has become increasingly apparent, when talking to foreign players and managers, that they call Alex Ferguson's side "Manchester". Outside Britain, Manchester City no longer appear to have a profile.

Gross has not been to Old Trafford but he is undaunted. "It is a good challenge for us. It is important we are brave and show a big heart. They will pressurise us and we will have to find out the best way to counter them. We have to be intelligent, realistic and efficient. We will not have many occasions to score but I am sure we will have some. We have to take them."

Gross is living in a hotel but expects to move into a flat or house near Chigwell by the end of the month. His Swiss girlfriend accompanied him to Westminster Bridge but remains in Switzerland with no prospect of a work permit.

The New Year's Eve trip ("it was as cold as Switzerland - and I missed the fireworks") is one of only two visits he has made to central London, the other was for visa purposes. A fan of Peter Gabriel, Elton John and M-People among others, Gross was a keen concert-goer in Switzerland and is looking forward to having more time to enjoy the capital's entertainment while accepting he will not be skating this season. The next London date is to see the Cirque du Soleil Alegria, "an old, famous circus" at the Albert Hall with the team.

David Pleat may be aboard by then, the former Tottenham manager begins work as director of football on 14 January with some wondering whether he is really the manager-in-waiting. "I am open to him," said Gross. "I am positive, we had a meeting and I felt he loves soccer. But it is important the powers are strictly divided. He will not be here, he will be at White Hart Lane."

Wimbledon's failure to surprise is the big surprise

There may have been no real surprises in the third round of the FA Cup (Stevenage aside, that is) or in the midweek Coca-Cola Cup semi-finals, but never let it be said that football as a whole has lost its capacity to surprise. OK, so you did not need to be a clairvoyant to predict that Manchester United might now be peering down at Barnsley from their lofty peak astride the Premiership, but elsewhere this season has sprung enough surprises to catch even the most convincing of bookies on the hop.

The form of Derby and Leicester has surprised those who wrote them off. Leicester went one-up against Atletico Madrid, for heaven's sake. Southampton, too, have so far upset the odds, thanks mainly to the form of 20-year-old Kevin Davies, who, for me, has been the surprise package of the season to date.

The form of Derby and Leicester has surprised those who wrote them off. Leicester went one-up against Atletico Madrid, for heaven's sake. Southampton, too, have so far upset the odds, thanks mainly to the form of 20-year-old Kevin Davies, who, for me, has been the surprise package of the season to date.

Coventry, as usual, are full of surprises: you never really know quite what to expect from the Sky Blues, but it is certainly not victories over Man United and Liverpool. And in Darren Huckerby they have the footballing equivalent of a conjurer: no one really knows what he's going to pull out of his bag of tricks next.

Wimbledon always spring a



OLIVIA
BLAIR
ON THIS
SEASON'S TALES
OF THE
UNEXPECTED

surprise; this season it's that they appear to have lost their ability to spring a surprise. Sheffield Wednesday's early demise was unexpected considering how well they started last season and the fact they had strengthened their squad with the likes of Paolo Di Canio and Peter Reid after just missing out on a European place.

That Everton and Spurs are suffering can be surprising no one - both teams were heading for a fall - but the same cannot be said about the form of Nick Barmby (one wasted season is forgiveable, two is not). The arrivals at White

Hart Lane of Christian Gross and Jürgen Klinsmann and the fact that Darren Anderton actually played some football before getting injured again.

No one would have prophesied Villa would lose their first four games, nor that Stan Collymore was going to forget where the goal was: after all, he knows Villa Park well enough. And who would have thought that Palace would be so unsellable away from home and so assable at Selhurst Park, or that Attilio Lombardo would be playing his football in SE25 this season?

No prizes for guessing the biggest surprise outside the Premiership. Kevin Keegan's return to football was astonishing; that he should choose to return at Fulham was staggering. But despite Keegan's much-heralded five-year plan the Cottagers have hardly set the Second Division alight. Watford have, however, inspired by the game's most put-upon strike force (Jason Lee and the evergreen "Rocket" Ronny Rosenthal) and its most prolific left-back (Peter Kennedy), they have opened up an almost uncatchable lead at the top. It will be a surprise if they are caught.

In the First Division newly promoted Stockport have

been the surprise packet, although you also could say that of their local rivals Manchester City - it's surprising just how low a side can sink.

In the Third Division, meanwhile, that accolade should go to 38-year-old Jimmy Quinn, scorer of 20 goals for high-flying Peterborough. Quinn has been the most significant of all Barry Fry's signings - and there have been a few.

The biggest surprise north of the border came last Friday when Celtic beat Rangers for the first time in a New Year game since 1988, although Hearts' early pace-setting also caused a stir.

Marco Negri has been a turn-up for the books, too, the tactician Italian having scored 33 goals so far for Rangers this season. His manager, Walter Smith, is not renowned for his successful foreign shopping trips (Oleg Salenko, Basile Boli and Erik Bo Anderson spring to mind).

England astounded rather than surprised Italy by holding out in Rome to secure their place in the World Cup finals. But those who remain sceptical about their World Cup chances will be hoping that they will remember France '98 for providing the biggest surprise of the season. *Ne c'est pas?*

Georgian genius with an empathy for bitter rivalry

People often ask why I think Gio has remained a Blue. Their voices betray both disbelief, which I understand but do not share, and covetousness, which I relish for its rarity value in relation to my team. One can only speculate as to why, but the old-fashioned promise-keeping which enabled City to sign him explains a lot.

The Tbilisi president, Merad Jordania, had met Francis Lee in a hotel to discuss the transfer. Representatives of some of Europe's biggest clubs were lurking in the lobby, wishing in vain for that meeting. Jordania, virtually a hostage in the suite, gave his word that Kinkladze would sign for - wait for it - £2m. He kept his word. Georgian honour, Jordania confirmed, is a serious matter.

City fans were sceptical about the newcomer after Ingbeekhts, Groenendijk and other Silenzi-esque imports had failed to produce much footballing arousal. Did they dare believe that multiple orgasms was round the corner? No.

It was stressed that he was Georgian, not Russian. Dining with fellow newcomer, Kit Symons, in the hotel that was then their home Symons heard some businessmen speaking what he thought was Gio's mother tongue.

FAN'S EYE
VIEW
NO 239
GEORGI
KINKLADZE
BY
MARC
STARR

That is, until the Kink found a dictionary.

Then there was utter disgust that his run and finish against Southampton only came second in Goal of the Season to Yeboah's volley against Liverpool. How many volleys are scored compared with goals of that standard?

No one knew what to believe about the enigma. There was an apparently dubious, but true, story about Robison Kinkladze returning

from war to urge his son to play football and quit a career with the Georgian National Dance company which Khatuna Kinkladze preferred her son to pursue.

His left-footed tours of the opposition halved stunned the support. This style began to draw straight-faced comparisons to Maradona. Few pundits were prepared to accept this but, then again, Gio didn't play for United, did he? He was predictably nicknamed Kinky, and T-shirts featuring the legend "Kinky 69" appeared.

It is argued that he would be in better company at Newcastle or Liverpool. I admit expecting him to eventually take the playmaker role at one of those clubs. Even Maradona, Gio's hero, failing to find a "better" club did not succeed. Unhappy spells at Saarbrücken in Austria and Boca Juniors suggested that Georgi preferred Manchester to Buenos Aires, which he was adored for.

Gio perhaps feels the frustration of fans who, when abroad, have to explain their team is nothing to do with Bobby Charlton. After years of "I'm not Russian, I'm Georgian!", he must sympathise, even if one situation is a bitter rivalry stretching back over many decades and the other led to a war of independence.

And as we know you won't yet use it to desert Manchester, have another Ferrari on us, King Kinkladze.

Spurs
can score five
at Stamford
what will
Brentford do
Tottenham Hotspur
looks at that
and other leading
fixtures this
week below,
assesses the
game march by

Arsenal v
Leading
Last season

Bolton v Sou
Leading
Last season

Chelsea v
Leading
Last season

Crystal Palace
Leading
Last season

Spurs have to move up several degrees of difficulty

If they can score five

goals at Stamford Bridge what will Manchester United do to Tottenham Hotspur at Old Trafford?

Guy Hodgson looks at that game and other leading Premiership fixtures this weekend while below, Rob McLean assesses the programme match by match.

If you wanted to mark the decline in Tottenham Hotspur, their wheeling and dealing this week would do as well as anything. Thirty years ago tomorrow Spurs broke the British transfer record when they paid Southampton £125,000 for Martin Chivers. Now a really big money move is more likely to break the club.

Like the team, there was a frenzy of activity but at the end there was little to show for it. Just a loan signing, the Italian Nicola Berti, which for a club which likes to think of itself as among the élite was a minimal response to the predicament of being second bottom of the Premiership.

They will sample the big time today but only as well-off tourists in a National Trust

property. Not so long ago Manchester United versus Tottenham was a meeting of giants but if the visitors win at Old Trafford the reaction will be akin to a Cup upset.

Maybe if United had not been caught against Coventry a fortnight ago, Tottenham might have found the champions in an over-confident and over-indulgent mood but the players' ears are still ringing from Alex Ferguson's eruption at Highfield Road.

"We like to make things difficult for ourselves," the United manager says repeatedly, although, at five points clear at the top of the Premiership, there are degrees of difficulty. "We need to make sure there are no more slip-ups." The home side have scored 30 times in 10 home

league matches while Tottenham have conceded 22 on their travels so the only thing likely to be on the slide is Spurs.

While Tottenham go north in trepidation, George Graham will travel in the opposite direction eager to meet his old club, Arsenal. He was sacked in 1995 because of his role in the "transfer hounds" affair and it is only now that he feels he can return with a Leeds side that can compete as equals.

"I'm always happy to go to Highbury and I'm looking forward to it again this time, perhaps more than ever," Graham said. "I'm comfortable about it because of the progress we have made in the last year or so."

The last two times I've been back it wasn't really my own team. We were taken

apart on the first occasion and on the second, a few months later in the FA Cup, we won with a very solid performance but really we were way behind Arsenal last season."

Not that Leeds have a promising record. They have won just once in the League in their last nine visits and arrive at Arsenal just as Ian Wright has rediscovered what the pieces of white metal at each end of the pitch are for. He scored against West Ham in the Coca-Cola Cup in midweek, only his second goal in three months.

Third-placed Chelsea have had a slump recently, too, and entertain Coventry having been dismembered by Manchester United last Sunday. That 5-3 rout followed a defeat at Southampton which makes the

present a particularly inopportune time for a flu virus to attack the squad.

Usually only Ruud Gullit knows what the team going to be but today even the Chelsea manager might be perplexed as at least five players have been laid low. Coventry, meanwhile, arrive at Stamford Bridge in rude health after successive wins over United and Liverpool.

Everton have a new striker, the French international Mickael Madar, to look forward to. Whether he will get on against Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park debatable but at least the manager, Howard Kendall, has options up front which is something he has been bereft of this season.

Liverpool, whose Steve

McManaman was named the player of the month for December yesterday, encounter another of their ghosts of lapses past Wimbledon. The Dons have lost on one of their last seven visits but arrive with the albatross of one win in their last seven matches. As ever at Anfield the outcome is wholly unpredictable.

John Prescott, the deputy Prime Minister, will officially open Bolton's Reebok Stadium today and then Colin Todd hopes his defence will look out. Southhampton. Wanderers have been conceding goals at the rate of two a game since their last win, against Newcastle on 1 December, an act of generosity which has seen them sink to just above the relegation places.

Newcastle, too, are beginning to look anxiously in that direction. Their shortcomings in front of goal have left them with one win in nine games and they are just six points away from the bottom three. Sheffield Wednesday, another team in a worrying run, will draw level if they beat them at Hillsborough today.

Barnsley, the bottom club, last won at West Ham in September 1919 and as they have scored a mere eight times away from home the chances of them ending the sequence are not favourable.

Blackburn, with 13, have been less than prolific either but only Wimbledon have conceded fewer on their travels so a tight match can be anticipated at Derby, who are unbeaten at home, tomorrow.

Arsenal v Leeds

Bergkamp 12
Leading scorer Wallace 10
Last season 3-0

Arsenal will be hoping that their midweek Coca-Cola Cup success at West Ham will mean an improvement in their League form. Ian Wright, who returned from suspension to make a scoring return at Upton Park, will lead the attack against a Leeds side managed by former Highbury manager George Graham. But England midfielder David Platt is still out with a groin injury and although full-back Lee Dixon returns to the squad after recovering from a similar problem, Wenger is likely to remain loyal to fellow Frenchman Gilles Grimandi. Graham, who is unbeaten in his last three games against Arsenal, still sees Wright as the major threat: "Some people have criticised Ian recently, but he is still one of the game's lethal finishers," Graham said.

Leeds' captain David Hopkin and Norwegian international midfielder Alf Inge Haland will have to be content with a place on the bench again as both were substitutes in last week's FA Cup tie at home to Oxford. Defender David Robertson completes a two-match ban.

Aston Villa v Leicester

Yorke, Taylor 6
Leading scorer Marshall 9
Last season 1-3

Leicester manager Martin O'Neill is optimistic that Ian Marshall and Steve Walsh will be fit. Striker Marshall should be given the all-clear from a groin injury while Walsh expects to return from a hamstring strain. If Marshall is ruled out, Tony Cottee, the former West Ham and Everton striker could come into the side after scoring as substitute in the FA Cup victory over Northampton last Saturday. O'Neill will be looking for his striker Emile Heskey to rediscover his goalscoring touch. Heskey, who celebrates his 20th birthday tomorrow and is trying to win a place in Glenn Hoddle's World Cup squad this year, has scored only once in the last 15 matches for the Foxes.

Riccardo Scimeca returns for Villa with England defender Gareth Southgate suffering with a twisted ankle. Julian Joachim, stands by to play against his former club, replacing Stan Collymore, who he came on for in the 2-2 FA Cup third round draw at Portsmouth last Saturday.

Bolton v Southampton

Blake 9
Leading scorer Davies 11
Last season: No corresponding fixture

Bob Taylor, the former Leeds striker on loan with Bolton from West Brom, may be given his chance to boost Colin Todd's attack at the Reebok Stadium. Taylor will come into the team if Dean Holdsworth, who has been out for a month with a knee and shin injury, does not recover in time. Bolton's goalkeeper Keith Brangan is now fully fit again after missing five matches with a groin injury and looks set to take over from Gavin Ward. Todd is still waiting to see if another former Leeds player, Mike Whittow, will be fit. The defender was taken off on a stretcher against Barnsley with a knee injury but X-rays revealed no major damage, although his chances of being fit in time are slim.

Southampton's Neil Moss is on standby to replace Wales international keeper Paul Jones, who is doubtful with a groin injury. Carlton Palmer, the club's signing from Leeds, will continue in defence if Norwegian Claus Lundekvam fails to recover from a calf injury.

Chelsea v Coventry

Vialli 4
Leading scorer Dublin 10
Last season: 2-0

Ruud Gullit will hold a Stamford Bridge roll-call today before deciding who is fit to take on Coventry. The Chelsea camp have been hit by a flu bug which meant Romanian Dan Petrescu and Italian Vialli were forced out of Wednesday's Coca-Cola Cup trip to Ipswich. Petrescu was again told to stay at home yesterday and with Roberto Di Matteo and youngster Nick Crittenton - and Gullit himself - still struggling along with Gianfranco Zola and Frank Leboeuf, the team is uncertain. Frank Sinclair is ruled out through suspension while Andy Myers damaged a hamstring on Wednesday and is also out of contention.

Coventry manager Gordon Strachan will leave it until the last moment to decide whether Romanian World Cup striker Viorel Moldovan, who he signed for £3.25m from Swiss club Grasshoppers, is ready to make his Premiership debut. Strachan will be without the suspended Marcus Hall and George Boateng while John Salako could return after three months out with a hamstring injury. Roland Nilsson is back after flu.

Crystal Palace v Everton

Shipperley 6
Leading scorer Speed 5
Last season: No corresponding fixture

Crystal Palace's injury crisis could mean an immediate debut for 19-year-old striker Marcus Bent following his transfer from Brentford. Palace's attempt to sign Tommy Johnson on loan from Celtic has run into trouble because of a failure to reach agreement over the length of the deal. Paul Warhurst is likely to be out for six weeks because of a stress fracture and Attilio Lombardo and Michele Padovano, who have been training with Palace this week after injuries, are unlikely to feature today. Neil Shipperley (groin) is also likely to miss out, but Bruce Dyer (ankle) is expected to play Jamie Smith is also likely to play despite an ankle problem. Everton will have their new French international striker Mickael Madar in the side, with Danny Cadamarteri likely to drop out. Slaven Bilic returns after a five-match ban, while Gary Speed is back after an ankle injury and a week of transfer speculation. Craig Short also returns after injury. Terry Phelan, the likely replacement for the injured Andy Hinchcliffe, is back after a knee operation.

And statistics

History turning against Everton and Tottenham

The threat of relegation hanging over two of the top flight's longest-serving members grows greater as the Premiership season progresses. Everton last suffered relegation 47 years ago, while Tottenham have been in the country's top division for 20 years.

Indeed Everton have played in the Premiership or the old First Division for more seasons (94) than any other club. Founder members of the Football League in 1888, they have spent only four seasons outside the top flight, 1930-31 and 1951-54.

Tottenham, meanwhile, have one of the best post-war records.

They have been outside the top division for only five seasons:

four immediately after the war and one when they dropped into the old Second Division 20 years ago.

As they attempt to escape from the relegation zone, Everton

turn to youth while Tottenham are opting for experience.

Back in August Everton were fielding one of the Premiership's oldest sides, with an average age of over 28. By last weekend the average had dropped to 23, with the teenagers Danny Cadamarteri, Michael Ball and Richard Dunne replacing the likes of Dave Watson, Terry Phelan and Slaven Bilic, while goalkeeper Thomas Myhra is 15 years Neville Southall's junior.

At the beginning of the season only Leeds had a younger team than Tottenham. However, the recent introduction of Jürgen Klinsmann has helped to push up the average age of the Spurs team from 26 to nearly 28.

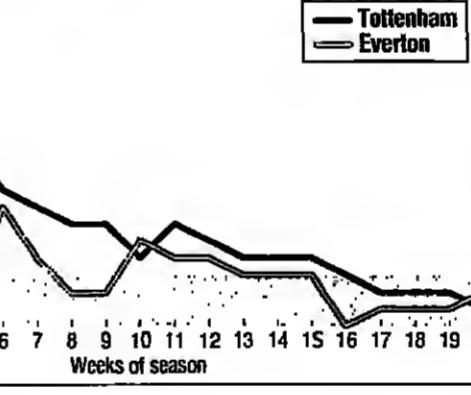
Statistics: Brian Sears

In their fight against relegation Everton have put their faith in youngsters like Danny Cadamarteri

Service record of the Premiership's current members

	Post-war seasons in top division	Consecutive seasons
Arsenal	52	52
Man United	51	23
Everton	49	44
Tottenham	47	20
Liverpool	44	36
Chelsea	43	6
Aston Villa	42	10
Newcastle	36	5
West Ham	34	5
Coventry	31	3
Leeds	31	8
Sheff Wed	30	7
Leicester	28	2
Southampton	26	20
Derby	24	2
Bolton	22	11
Blackburn	16	6
C Palace	12	12
Wimbledon	12	12
Barnsley	11	11

How the mighty have fallen



FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

	Home	Away	Form	Upcoming matches								
Pl	Ps	Gd	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
1 Man Utd	21	46	+33	9	1	0	30	4	15	3	19	12
2 Blackburn	21	41	-17	7	3	1	25	12	5	5	13	9
3 Chelsea	21	39	+25	6	2	1	17	7	6	1	5	14
4 Liverpool	20	37	+17	7	0	3	23	10	4	4	2	13
5 Leeds	21	35	+7	5	3	3	16	12	5	2	3	11
6 Arsenal	20	34	+12	6	2	2	21	8	3	5	2	15
7 Derby	21	32	+6	7	3	0	20	5	2	2	7	13
8 West Ham	21	31	-1	8	0	1	18	6	2	1	9	10
9 Middlesb	21	28	+4	3	6	3	13	11	1	4	2	10
10 Aston Villa	21	26	-2	5	2	3	16	H	2	3	5	13
11 Newcastle	20	26	-4	5	3	4	13	B	2	2	4	12
12 Wimbledon	20	24	-3	3	2	6	12	Ib	3	4	2	9
13 Southampton	21	24	-5	6	1	4	18	H	1	2	7	16
14 Coventry	21	23	-8	4	6	1	17	Ib	1	2	3	16
15 C Palace	21	23	-8	0	4	5	6	Ib	5	4	3	10
16 Sheff Wed	21	23	-12	5	2	4	15	Ib	3	6	7	27
17 Bolton	21	21	-19	3	6	1	9	7	Ib	3	7	26
18 Everton	21	20	-11	4	2	4	14	15	Ib	3	7	6
19 Tottenham	21	20	-18	4	3	5	12</					



SPORT

Saturday 10 January 1998 ■

Carling retires – reluctantly and with a hint of rancour

Will Carling yesterday hung up his boots, but instead of a hearty farewell, England's most successful rugby union captain and Harlequins stalwart left the playing field in less than happy circumstances. David Llewellyn reports.

Sadly in the end there was no fanfare. No party. No back slapping, beer-swilling farewell in the club bar. Instead Will Carling's goodbye was tainted with a hint of bitterness. After 11 years of top-flight rugby played latterly against a soundtrack of "Sweet Chariot" there was a sour note to the announcement that he was retiring from the game he loves.

For a start those close to the 32-year-old former England captain insist that yesterday's decision was not the one he had intended to make. He still wanted to carry on with Harlequins, but press and public reaction this last week had persuaded him that now was the right time to go.

And so for the man who led England on 59 occasions and played in a further 13 matches for his country, there was an undercurrent of rancour as he brought to a premature end a troubled season of ups and downs with Quins.

"I'm genuinely sorry the relationships had become strained of late," said Carling, who had been linked with a move to north London rivals Wasps only last weekend.

"Retirement from the game is a big wrench, but it's the right decision for me. I've spent the last week considering this decision. Although I've been flattened by the interests of other clubs, Quins is my club and I've always said I would end my playing days here."

There were rumours recently of a rift between Carling and Harlequins director of rugby, Andy Keast. The centre's frequent absences from training sessions had not helped to reduce any friction and a broken hand had precluded any activity over the last couple of weeks.

The professional game is a hard one and no one has an automatic right to a first-team



So long, Sweet Chariot: Will Carling, who led England on 59 occasions, leads the red rose celebrations after their Five Nations' Grand Slam in 1991

Photograph: Reuters

place anymore. The regime at Quins is simply no train, no play.

Even so, Keast said: "Will's class meant there was an extra element of competition for a centre place. His presence in the squad was why other people were playing so well, because they knew they had to do so to get in ahead of Will. I have the greatest respect for Will as a player, and although things have not worked out as we would have liked over the last few months, there's no doubt his departure will be a great loss to the squad."

The club added: "All of us at Harlequins wish Will every success with his business and tele-

vision enterprises and hope he will continue to be a regular visitor to the Stoop."

"The club has already been approached by members regarding a suitable tribute to mark his requirement and the board are delighted to accord him a testimonial in recognition of his 10 years as a player for the club."

Carling, for all his controlled image, has never been far from controversy. His infamous "old fart" remark earned him the sack as England captain in 1995. He was reinstated two days later after apologising to every member of the committee. Even his appointment as

captain in 1988 aroused com-

ment and criticism, he was only 22 and the youngest skipper for half a century.

He played his first match for Quins against Metropolitan Po-

lice in February 1987, while he was still at Durham University.

He scored 162 points in league matches for Quins, a total which includes 21 tries, six penalties and 27 conversions.

This season, however, Carling has made just five appear-

ances in the Allied Dunbar Premiership, and one of those was as a replacement.

Carling is a proud man, with a proud record, and naturally the tributes flowed yesterday, just as there had been when he stepped down as England captain in 1995 having led them to 49 wins, then as an international

in April player last year.

Peter Brook, the president of the Rugby Football Union, said: "His contribution to England as a player, and through his record number of appearances as captain, was immense."

Colin Herridge, the former

RFU committee man and long time mentor of Carling, called him a "national treasure".

The former England coach, Jack Rowell, said: "Carling as a captain was unique and I don't think we will see the like of him again."

Geoff Cooke, who stunned the establishment by appointing Carling captain in November 1988 after the former Sedbergh pupil had played just seven Tests, said: "Making him captain was the best rugby selection I ever made. He has had a great, long career and it's a pity that his abrupt retirement comes when there was still plenty of rugby left in him. Geoff Cooke, former England manager.

'No question: he was a world class centre'

● Carling as a captain was unique and I don't think we will see the like of him again. As a player he was explosive in attack and defence, with a cool head in a crisis and with the capacity to smoothly drive on a team that was purring like a Rolls-Royce. When he resigned as captain all the players still looked to him in times of trouble and that is a measure of his influence and the respect they had for him. Jack Rowell, former England coach.

● I have the greatest respect for Will as a player, and although things have not worked out as we would have liked over the last few months, there's no doubt his departure will be a great loss to the squad. Andy Keast, Harlequins director of rugby.

● Will was probably one of the most consistent players in the international field. He was consistently great and occasionally produced magnificent performances. He changed the nature of English rugby and contributed to the mass appeal of the sport. You only have to look at the state of rugby 10 years ago to see what a change has occurred, and he did much to promote rugby and its high-profile image. He has crossed the boundary, being a personality in his own sport, and is a nationally recognised figure. Phil de Glanville, Carling's successor as England captain.

● It was one of those situations where everything fell in place. They say cometh the hour, cometh the man and Will proved to be the man to provide the focus for a resurgence of England's fortunes. He became a media darling and was the first high-profile English player. There is no question that he was a world class centre. Making him captain was the best rugby selection I ever made. He has had a great, long career and it's a pity that his abrupt retirement comes when there was still plenty of rugby left in him. Geoff Cooke, former England manager.

Hidden t

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3504. Saturday 10 January

By Phi

ACROSS

- 1 Go round Lake and risk spoiling a lot of travel (5-8)
- 10 Argument linked to forward fitting on boat (7)
- 11 Sums are amended with a rubber (7)
- 12 and 13 Unknown character seen in nightmare? (4,4)
- 14 Time to make offer's about right (4)
- 17 It's could make you more wet than dry, possibly! (7)
- 18 A very little insect is put in tin (7)
- 19 Work needing to be done to support timber (7)
- 22 Dog that is seen with Antarctic explorer (7)
- 24 Friendly power shuns friendly power (4)
- 25 and 26 Drug's behind window furniture where things can't be seen (5,4)
- 26 see 25 across
- 29 Two letters I'd reversed on chart (7)
- 30 Evict a crowd (4,3)
- 31 Name embraced by "MB's air" needed, possibly (7,6)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardback copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published Saturday, 17 January, in the *Independent*, B.O. Box 10191. The independent, Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: F Corlett, Brentwood; W Marlow, Hereford; C Fox, Manchester; G Alexander, Pevensie Bay; N Kerr, Fife.

TEN PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 14

IN MONDAY'S 20-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

"Germany and England should have waited before spending the money they already have. It could be a big waste of both money and time." Lennart Johansson, president of Uefa, talks to Ian Stafford about World Cup bids and the future of international football

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Saturday 10 January 1998

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FOOTBALL

Stevenage given go-ahead to stage their dream tie

Stevenage Borough were yesterday given the go-ahead to stage the biggest game of their history at their Broadhall Way stadium.

The Football Association confirmed the Conference side's right to host the fourth-round tie against Newcastle United by turning down an appeal from the Premiership club over the ground's safety.

Members of the FA's Challenge Cup committee brought the saga over the venue for the match to a close by ruling that safety experts had been right to approve the ground and the temporary seating planned to increase its capacity.

That, however, may not be the end of the row that has highlighted this piece of Cup romance. A fresh dispute now seems likely over the cost of tickets for the match on 25 January. Stevenage intend to raise prices sharply for the game.

The FA spokesman, Steve Douhie, gave the club the good news about staging the match after a 90-minute meeting at the Broadhall Way.

"We always rely on the safety authorities and both they and the police are happy for the game to go ahead and therefore so are we," Douhie said. "Newcastle appear to have accepted the decision with good grace."

Since the draw was made, the dispute which broke out had seen Stevenage accuse Newcastle of "Big Brother" tactics, while Newcastle's manager, Kenny Dalglish, had reportedly phoned Stevenage's chairman, Victor Green, to deny he was "running scared" and said he would play between the non-League side and the FA.

Newcastle had insisted that the Broadhall Way ground was not large enough to host the televised tie and Dalglish was said to have been worried about the safety of fans. However, Newcastle said in a statement yesterday: "We had raised a number of issues with the FA and we are satisfied that they have been given due consideration. Now that the matter has been resolved, both we and Stevenage look forward to playing the fourth-round tie at Broadhall Way."

Stevenage are concerned to prevent a black market for the 8,000 tickets available for the match and to prevent Newcastle fans without tickets travelling to the game. A final decision on ticket price levels will not be made until next week, and these have to be agreed by Newcastle and the FA.

Stevenage's manager, Paul Fairclough, said: "There's no doubt that there will be an increase. There has to be unfortunately. We are going to be seeing £50m worth of class players on this pitch and I think the prices will reflect that."

- Mark Bradley

ON

TV THIS WEEKEND PAGE 250

Holiday Inn
CROWNE PLAZA®

Holiday Inn
Garden Court®

Holiday Inn
EXPRESS®

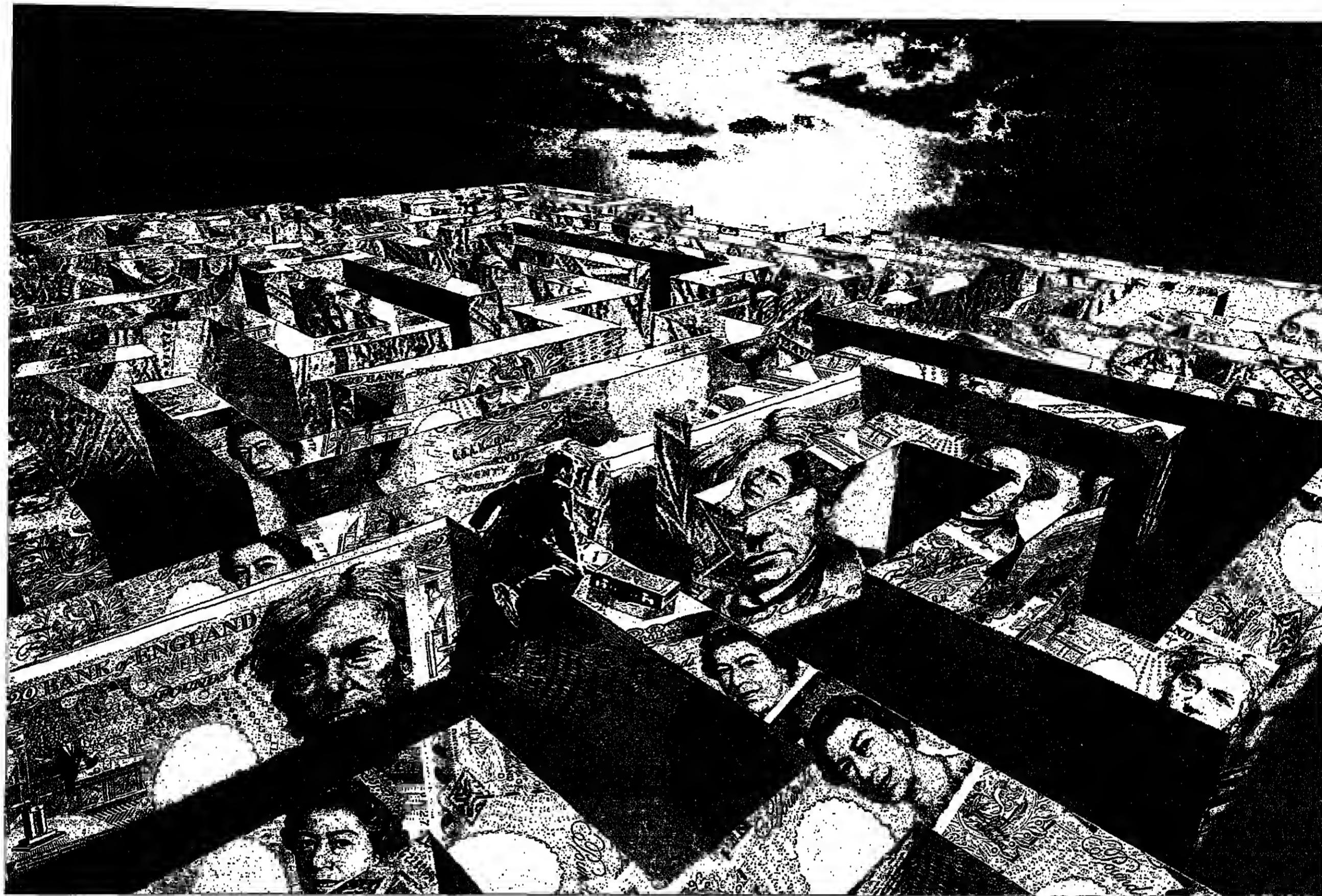
ALL YEAR ROUND
SHORT BREAK OFFERS
AT HOTELS ACROSS
THE UK



YOUR MONEY

PERSONAL FINANCE, PROPERTY & MOTORING

Saturday 10 January 1998



Ron Lowery/ Tony Stone

Hidden treasures in the money maze

Go on, be honest. Like most of us out there your New Year's resolutions probably collapsed within 36 hours of the clock striking midnight. But that needn't mean you have to stay stuck in the labyrinth for ever. Nic Cianti offers a way out.

Insurance companies, mortgage lenders, fund managers and high street banks are all different animals. They thrive on one thing in common. They thrive on our inertia.

They know we have good intentions, that we hate being ripped off, that we can spot a bad deal if we really try. But finding our way out of the thickets can be so time-consuming it sometimes feels easier to stay rooted where we are - and that is how the money men become rich.

The important thing to remind yourself is that the steps you take to improve your finances in 1998 are emphatically not part of a new year's resolution package. Rather, they each involve a series of simple, even if occasionally time-consuming steps. Once

you have sorted out one problem, you can move to the next one. Before you know it, you will be many pounds better off.

Take the first problem: Christmas overspend syndrome. The chances are you are hundreds of pounds, perhaps even £1,000 in the red on your credit card. Sticking with your traditional issuer means paying the bill off in, say, four stages of £250-odd each month. By the end, you will probably have paid up to £42 interest to your card issuer.

On the other hand, switching the debt to Capital One Bank, which has a one-year offer of 6.9 per cent APR, means repaying the same debt would incur interest of £1.5 or so. So that's £25 saved.

Then there is your bank account. For the past 457 years you have been loyal to the high street bank which gave you your first cheque book. The fact is, it pays interest of just 0.5 per cent if you have £1,000 with it. More likely, when you are overdrawn with say, Lloyds, you pay 1.45 per cent a month, plus a further £8, if you are more than a tenner overdrawn.

Again, the solution is simple: Schroders offers a cheque book and 6.4 per cent gross on minimum balances of £1,000. If you are an overdraft merchant, Alliance &

Leicester, while not so generous in the interest stakes, charges only 0.76 per cent and no additional monthly fee. In nearly every case, banks and building societies will fall over themselves to help you transfer your standing orders and direct debits to a new account with them. Try them and see.

So, you are probably £60 to £70 better off already. Funny how the walls on that maze already look smaller. Fancy another go?

Let's take your savings. You have paid off your debts and are now putting money away for a rainy day. You need quick access to it, so shares and suchlike are not high on the list. Alliance & Leicester, so nice when it came to overdrafts, is paying you 4.6 per cent gross on that £1,500 you have tucked away. That is £69 a year before tax. The thing is, Woolwich is paying 7 per cent gross on its Cardsaver account.

That is £105 a year before tax, or £36 more. Plus, you are married. One of you is on higher rate tax, the other is on 23 per cent or may not be working. Have you filled in a form to have interest paid gross? For a non-taxpayer, that works out at £20 more interest for every £100 paid gross. For higher-rate taxpayers, having an account in your

lower-rated spouse's name saves you £17. You're on a roll. Take the mortgage next.

For the past three years, you have been on the Halifax's variable rate, currently 8.7 per cent. On £50,000 loan, that means payments of £330 a month. A two-year fix, presently available from FirstMortgage, is pegged at 4.7 per cent. That is about £180 a month for two years, reverting thereafter to a variable rate which is presently 0.5 per cent cheaper than the Halifax. So even after two years, you will save almost £20 a month.

Then there is your home and contents insurance. Premium Search, a telephone broker based in Northampton, offers to undercut the cheapest annual quote for combined cover by £50. Easy.

We're really motoring now. Which brings us to car insurance. Last year, inertia meant you stayed with the same insurer. Go on, make a few calls. The chances are you'll save another £50 or so.

By this stage, the hedges on that maze are really small. So small you can step over them with ease. You are many hundreds of pounds a year better off, to the point where you can begin to set aside money for the long term. That means equities, which experts assure us have out-performed de-

posit accounts over longer periods. But where to turn?

Things are now a little more complicated. There are scores of financial products, all of them slightly different from each other. Which is right for you?

At this stage, swallow your pride. You need to talk to a good independent financial adviser. They are not difficult to find. One call will give you a list of three in your area. You may need a few tips on how to pick one. But that comes later. Meantime, get cracking on these ideas. And watch the pounds rolling in while the maze shrinks.

Premium Search 0800 109876; Capital One 0800 069000; Alliance & Leicester Alliance account 0500 959595; Woolwich 0800 222200; FirstMortgage 0800 080088; Schroders 0171 6533301; for a financial adviser near you, call IfA Promotion 0117 971 1177.

The Independent has published a free 'Guide to Making Your Investments Work for You'. The guide, by Steve Lodge, personal finance editor on the *Independent on Sunday*, is sponsored by Wesleyan Financial Services. It is available by calling 0800 137 9749. Or fill in the coupon on page four.

INSIDE

3/JOHN WINDSOR
Leather fetishes

5/JOHN ANDREW
Double up your shares

9/GAVIN GREEN
No longer the people's Beetle

11/ROBERT LIEBMAN
Keeping out the beastly buyers

In the July Budget, the Chancellor announced that tax exempt savings schemes will change in April 1999. As a result you may not be able to continue to enjoy the current tax benefits offered by a PEP. However, the Government has announced that a new tax-privileged vehicle is to be introduced - the Individual Savings Account, or ISA for short. Full details have yet to be confirmed and we will keep you updated in relation to the future implications for PEPs. The price of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up, you may not get back as much as you invest. The value of your benefits will depend on your own circumstances. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. M&G do not offer investment advice or make any recommendations regarding investments - we only promote the packaged products and services of the M&G marketing group. You should contact your independent financial adviser (if you have one) before investing. (Source: Micropal UK Fixed Interest sector. The difference between the buying and selling price of units in the M&G Blue Chip Fund was 0.5% as at 2 January 1998, 0.55% for The M&G Managed Income Fund and 0.65% for The M&G Corporate Bond Fund as at 26th December 1997. Issued by M&G Financial Services Limited (Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority). Registered Office: M&G House, Victoria Road, Chelmsford CM1 1JR. M&G Unit Trusts are managed by M&G Securities Limited (Regulated by the FSA and the Personal Investment Authority).)

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2/PERSONAL FINANCE



Time for a tax-form amnesty

NIC
CICUTTI

PERSONAL FINANCE JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Time for a small confession. A few months ago, taking my courage in both hands, I actually completed my 1996/97 Inland Revenue tax return. Despite my allegedly knowledgeable status in such matters, I hate filling in these forms, and it was with a great sense of relief (and some pride) that I mailed mine off to Edinburgh.

Imagine my surprise a few weeks later when a letter arrived from the Revenue to fine anyone this year would be a disgrace. Treasury ministers (perhaps even Geoffrey Robinson himself, the Paymaster-General and Government tax expert) must declare a temporary amnesty towards late returns. One month would help most people, two months would solve nearly everyone's problems.

Secondly, the Revenue should also go back to the drawing board in respect of the form itself. Not for my sake (although I clearly need all the help I can get), but to assist the hundreds of thousands of others whose only crime is to have a perfectly understandable phobia.

Welcome back to our 12-page Your Money section, halted temporarily during the festivities. This edition, the first of the year, has a "what to do in 1998" slant. We hope to cover similar areas in the course of the next few weeks, ahead of (yawn) the end of the 1997/98 tax year in April. If there are any points you wish to see covered, please write in to me: Nic Cicutti, The Independent, 100 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5DL.

One issue you may be interested in is how to make your investments work for you. If so, this is the subject of a new guide, written by Steve Lodge, my colleague on the *Independent on Sunday*, our sister paper. The guide is available free to readers of *The Independent*. Call 0800 137 97 49 for your copy.

A couple of years ago, I attended a Revenue press conference where self-congratulatory officials described the forms they would be asking us to fill out as "the easiest to understand in the world".

MONEY MAKEOVER

A lesson to learn about the pension

Name: Heike Gerhards

Age: 32

Occupation: German language tutor
The problem: Heike has a property with a market value of approximately £60,000, on which she has a repayment mortgage of £42,000 with NatWest. She currently pays about 8 per cent interest.

Heike is self-employed and consequently has a small personal pension, into which she pays £50 a month. She wonders whether this will be enough to sustain her at retirement.

She is also concerned that the money she sets aside to pay her tax liabilities is not earning enough interest. She would also like advice on income replacement policies in the event of falling ill, plus private medical insurance cover, in that order.

The adviser: David Holland, an independent financial adviser at RK Harrison Financial Services, The Maltings, Lurke Street, Bedford, 01234 305555.

The advice: As far as her mortgage is concerned, Heike could consider a remortgage, taking advantage of Alliance & Leicester's two-year fixed interest rate, which at the time of writing stands at 4.75 per cent, where the valuation fee is refunded on completion. There is a 0.5 per cent arrangement fee, £210 in her case, and an early redemption penalty in the first five years equivalent to six months' interest. This could lead to a potential saving of around £70 per month.

The potential saving over two years would be £1,680.

Although the availability of mortgage offers changes rapidly and Alliance & Leicester's deal may no longer be an option, there is no doubt that Heike could obtain a better deal from the Revenue. The Revenue claims the majority of unreturned forms are from accountants and tax agents, who always leave things to the last minute.

Perhaps this is true: we shall see. But it strikes me that despite the Revenue's protestations, there is the very real prospect that hundreds of thousands of people will miss the 31 January deadline to complete last year's tax returns. Filing late returns £100 each, as it has given itself the power to do, could net the Inland Revenue tens, possibly hundreds of millions of pounds.

A couple of years ago, I attended a Revenue press conference where self-congratulatory officials described the forms they would be asking us to fill out as "the easiest to understand in the world".

This is a fancy way of saying they will put it in companies which can tap into themes (trends) such as the boom in financial services, the proliferation of media, or expanding

than is otherwise available to her from NatWest.

Heike's current level of pension contributions, £50 per month, would lead to a fund value of £70,880 at 60, based on an assumed net growth rate of 8 per cent per annum. Up to 25 per cent could be taken as tax-free cash. If the whole of the retirement fund were to be applied to purchase an annuity, based on a single life female aged 60, where the annuity is payable monthly in advance and rises in value by 4 per cent a year compound, the initial gross annual pension would be £3,972.

The pension referred to above would represent about 4.05 per cent of her projected earnings, assuming her income rises by 5 per cent a year, compound.

I calculate that for Heike to achieve a target pension equivalent to 50 per cent of her projected income at age 60, she will need to increase her monthly contributions to 21.5 per cent of her rising earnings. Unfortunately, even if she could afford this, her current personal pension allowance would restrict contributions to £365 per month, or 17.5 per cent of earnings.

I understand that Heike is investing in Legal & General's Managed Fund, which over one year to 31 October 1996, on an offer-to-offer basis with gross income reinvested, achieved a return of 12.59 per cent against a sector average of 12.09 per cent.

Over five years, Legal & General achieved 12.99 per cent on an annualised basis against a sector average of 13.41 per cent. Legal & General's investment performance is average: it does, however, have an enviable reputation for tracker funds and it is understood that its new Managed Tracker Fund should be available to personal pension policyholders some time this year.

For private medical insurance, Royal & Sun Alliance offers the best terms for the most common "Scale B" type of policy, with full out-patient and in-patient cover at £36.54 per month. The best terms for in-patient only cover are from Norwich Union Personal Care at £18.55 per month. This would, however, have a two-year claims moratorium in respect of pre-existing conditions.

Permanent health insurance (PHI) for a female aged 33 next birthday, who is a smoker, with cover to cease at age 60 and a deferred period of 13 weeks before benefits kick in, would cost £70.44 per month from Friends Provident under the company's Increasing Claim Plan. This would provide a benefit of £1,330 per month, or 63.86 per cent of salary (the maximum available).

Under the Increasing Claim Plan, the benefit will increase at 5 per cent



Mastering the future: the adviser steered Heike Gerhards away from permanent health insurance to cheaper critical illness cover

Photograph: Thomas Vilhelm Jorgensen

per annum compound. The first increase taking place when a claim has been in course of payment for one year. At the termination of the claim, the benefit will revert to the original level.

However, PHI cover is quite expensive and while it provides valuable protection, at nearly 3.4 per cent of her gross income, she may consider the cost too high.

A cheaper option is critical illness insurance, which pays out a lump sum on diagnosis on a number of life-threatening or crippling illnesses, including strokes, cancer or heart attacks. The most competitive quote on cover of £50,000, for a smoker from 32 up to age 60, would be £19.98 a month from Scottish Mutual. This premium is reviewable after a few years, however, GA Life offers the best guaranteed premium for the same cover at £23.60.

Heike should check to ensure that she has premium waiver benefit on her pension contributions which will provide protection in the event that she is unable to maintain contributions during sickness or accident.

Heike has around £10,000 invested in a NatWest High Income Account; she may wish to consider an instant access account through Scottish Widows (Postal) which currently gives gross interest of 7.1 per cent on deposits above £10,000. Alternatively, Alliance & Leicester's 1st Class Instant Account pays 7.5 per cent gross on the same sum, although only three withdrawals may be made per year.

Finally, if Heike has not made a will, her property could end up in the hands of people she would have no wish to benefit. A will can ensure that her estate is distributed in accordance with her wishes and avoids the potential for posthumous squabbles.

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/GT GLOBAL'S UK KEY TRENDS FUND

The product: GT Global's UK Key Trends Fund.

The deal: Invest at least £1,000 (or £500 through a PEP) and GT Global will invest your money "thematically".

This is a fancy way of saying they will put it in companies which can tap into themes (trends) such as the boom in financial services, the proliferation of media, or expanding

private health care.

Three-quarters of the money goes into listed UK companies deemed to profit from these trends. The rest goes into a similar, world-wide fund.

Plus points: If the fund managers get it right, the trendy stock-picking will yield handsome rewards.

GT Global, which manages £10bn world-wide, has carved

out a niche by identifying the trends and has done well.

A similar fund in Canada returned 27.8 per cent last year - against just 20.6 per cent for its peers.

The fund managers at GT have a rigorous screening process to eliminate fly-by-night companies from their investments. Most GT funds have performed consistently above average in recent years, though

there have been some notable exceptions.

Drawbacks and risks: Trends are nothing new. In the early Seventies an investment vehicle called The Motorway Trust was set up. The theme was that motorways would be put up all over the country - it was a boom industry. The trust folded after a few years.

GT Global themes include

financial services, which are likely to boom because states will not be able to afford insurance, but individuals supposedly will; and an ageing population, which is predicted to boost demand for sophisticated drugs and innovative therapies.

These trends, however, are no more irrefutable than the growth of motorways appeared to be in the Seventies.

Charges include a 5 per cent initial charge (which is average) and a 1.5 per cent annual management fee (on the high side).

Verdict: Well researched, but only for the wary.

Marks out of five: Two, though the fund may still present an attraction for inveterate risk-lovers.

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3/PERSONAL FINANCE

COLLECT TO INVEST

A case of luggage fetishism

Indulge yourself in a harmless fetish: collect leather luggage. This is no ordinary turn-on: as John Windsor writes, it's not the material involved that determines the fetishism, but the personal identification with the collectible.

A private collection of no fewer than 154 pieces of modern Louis Vuitton luggage is being offered by Christie's South Kensington this month. There are trunks, suitcases, hold-alls, hat boxes, cruiser bags, shoe cases, brief cases, beauty cases and men's clutch bags – sufficient for a permanently jet-setting *famille nombrise*.

It is no surprise that the vendor, an anonymous and evidently rich "lady" thought to be of Middle Eastern origin, seems to have developed an addiction to posh luggage. Technically, it is a fetishistic collectable; that is, one that the owner identifies with (not necessarily because much luggage is made of leather).

Old, honey-coloured leather suitcases smelling of spilled perfume and plastered with the stickers of the Orient Express, Cunard and grand hotels in Nice and Nairobi are reminders of a bygone age of gracious living and intrepid travelling – a joy to own and cult objects to be seen with.

Luggage made by the French company Louis Vuitton, founded in 1854, has long occupied the top rack of style – without relying on the lure of leather. Throughout its history, the Vuitton family has hob-nobbed with leading fashion designers, explorers, automobile designers, even composers of music, producing custom-made suitcases and trunks covered with the distinctive LV-monogram canvas.

Their concealed compartments and cunning fold-out contraptions tell intimate tales of lives lived to the full. A Louis Vuitton Stokowski travel bureau trunk of 1941 – put into production after being designed for Leopold Stokowski, the avant-garde conductor who brought fame to the Philadelphia Orchestra in the Twenties – sold for £17,000 at a Christie's charity auction of antique trunks in Hong Kong in 1996.

An ingeniously designed writing desk folds into its top, and there is storage for books and files, even a typewriter.

Trunks are a thing of the past – there is none in the forthcoming South Ken sale – but it was Vuitton who designed the first wardrobe trunk in 1875 (having been tipped off by the



courier Worth that crinolines were on their way out) and they are now collected and used as space-saving bedroom furniture. Some are serving as linen chests at the foot of the bed.

In the past couple of years, according to Suzette Shields of Christie's South Ken, trunks have risen in price from £1,400-£1,500 to around £1,800.

A Louis Vuitton wardrobe trunk bound in leather and brass fetched £1,840 (estimate £1,200-£1,800) in South Ken's monthly costume and textile sale in November. A new Louis Vuitton trunk can cost up to £8,500.

At auction, this is still a dealer's market, so private buyers stand a chance of carrying off vintage luggage at below retail prices. A Vuitton suitcase from the Twenties will probably cost you £500-£700. It is not only the Hong Kong Chinese that go for them. Ms Shields reports that the Japanese are big buyers. They will be much in evidence at this month's big sale.

Sotheby's also sells luggage, both in its costume and textile sales and its sales of collectors' vehicles and automobilia. Auctioneer Toby Wilson lyricises: "Swanning through London airport with a Louis Vuitton suitcase is a statement of style, status and wealth. I know a lady who bought a

set of Vuitton luggage at Sotheby's specially for her honeymoon, then sold it privately when she got back. It was for appearance – she just wanted that honeymoon to be an event to remember".

In this month's sale of Louis Vuitton at South Ken: a lot of four pieces – dark suitcase in LV fabric, bound in leather and brass, the interior labelled Louis Vuitton Paris Nice 931732 (shown here); a beauty case – the interior lined in beige leather with a removable panel between two sections and adjustable compartments for flasks; a handbag and a make-up bag. Estimate: £900-£1,200 the lot.

The Vuitton company is still a style pioneer – which augurs well for secondhand Vuitton prices. Just as Gaston, Louis Vuitton's son, invited leading artists and designers such as Cristofle to design trendy bottles and silver accessories for his luggage, the Vuitton company celebrated the centenary of its famous monogram last year by commissioning designs from seven designers, including Vivienne Westwood, Helmut Lang and Manolo Blahnik. Westwood characteristically, designed a bum bag to be worn like a bustle, preferably atop exposed buttocks. Flagship Vuitton stores are

to open in Bond Street and the Champs Elysées, Paris, early next year.

Vintage motorists are among the most enthusiastic bidders at auction. Vuitton designed trunks contoured to fit the hoods of limousines by Rolls-Royce, Peugeot and Hotchkiss with havelled lids that kept out dust and

Bags of style: Louis Vuitton luggage to be auctioned at Christie's

rain. There were ice boxes, footrest cases – rubberised top for feet, stowed on the floor in front of the back seat – and above all, picnic sets, which have acquired a vogue of their own. Just the thing for Ascot.

Sotheby's does a nifty line in them at its sales of collectors' vehicles and automobilia. Picnic sets by Vuitton are rare, but there are plenty by Coracle and some by Mappin & Webb, Drew, Sirram, Barrett and the noted Finnigans. The ones that sell best look the most nostalgic, with shiny silvered kettle, spirit burner, wicker-bound milk bottle and rucked crockery and cutlery.

The auctioneers know the ones most likely to sell – they are illustrated in the catalogue. At Sotheby's, a Barrett with not only a kettle but a compact saucepan, nest of glasses, three ceramic condiment sets, butter jar, brandy and whisky bottles, hip flask and corkscrew, fetched £747 in September's vehicle sale. At least the lifestyle that that denotes is not a thing of the past.

Never pick up any old leather luggage or wicker picnic sets by the handles: leather fatigue and woodworm in the wicker could mean, warns Mr Wilson, "that you are left with the handle in your hand and the rest of it still on the floor".

Christie's South Kensington: A Collection of Louis Vuitton Luggage. Tuesday 27 January, 4pm after the costume and textile sale (2pm) in which there are 25 lots of luggage. 85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 (0171-581 7611). Sotheby's Collectors' Vehicles and Automobilia, RAF Museum, Hendon, Monday 30 March (10.30am).

INTERNET INVESTOR



Home loans on-line

ROBIN AMLÖT

Just over a month ago, I was writing about using the World Wide Web to find the right mortgage. Then, it was not possible to arrange a mortgage on-line. Now it is. Birmingham-based broker Paragon Mortgages has launched the first mortgage which is available exclusively on-line through its website. Paragon offers a two-year fixed rate, at 4.59 per cent, for loans of up to 70 per cent.

This is not only the first mortgage directly available on-line, it is also among the lowest offers available. For those with smaller deposits, Paragon is offering a two-year fixed rate of 4.99 per cent for loans of up to 90 per cent.

As with all fixed-rate loans, there is a thumping penalty clause for early redemption. In this instance, if you pay off the mortgage within six years, you will be faced with paying the equivalent of six months' interest repayments. However, the loan is portable to a new property.

Through the website you can apply on-line for a decision in principle within a day. The on-line "agreement-in-principle" form gives Paragon enough information to do a quick credit check. There is no charge and no obligation on you to proceed any further.

Providing Paragon agrees your proposal, the next step

is to download a full application form. At this stage there is an application fee of £100 and a completion fee of £100 for loans of up to £50,000, or £150 for loans up to £100,000. Although Paragon charges no valuation fee, you will have to pay legal costs which may exceed £250. Buildings and contents insurance is compulsory.

Paragon also has a range of discounts, cashbacks and fixes. Full details are available on the website.

At the same time as Paragon launched its fixed-rate mortgage, the Staffordshire Building Society began taking its first tentative steps on the Web. The society has assets of just over £1bn and is a "committed mutual". As such it offers established customers a discounted "loyalty mortgage" interest rate.

Staffordshire's site offers basic background on the society and its ethos. So far, there is only limited information about its mortgages and none at all about its personal equity plan or credit card. But added-value content is likely to follow now the society's site is operational.

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1930/010

To profit from endowments you need a policy of no surrender

For holders of with-profits savings plans and pensions, the annual round of bonus declarations is a bitter-sweet ritual.

Announcements by insurers of how much they will be paying policyholders whose plans mature this year also offer a clue as to how much the rest of us stand to get in a few years' time. The news is both good and bad, as Andrew Verity explains.

For those who have held endowments or self-employed pensions for the last 25 years, this year's season may be the sweetest ever. When policies were bought in 1973, the stock market was about to hit its lowest point of the last three decades. But since then, a long bull-run has produced spectacular returns which should make those policyholders very glad they bought their with-profit endowments.

A policyholder who started a £50-a-month, 25-year endowment with GA Life in 1973 would this year collect a stunning payout of £10,784 – on contributions totalling just £15,000. That is 5 per cent more than last year's record payout. It is equivalent to an annual interest rate of 14.2 per cent, every year since 1973.

Payments on 10 and 25-year endowment policies*

Life Office	10-year	Equivalent annual yield	25-year	Equiv
GA Life	£10,305	10.4%	£120,784	14.2%
Norwich Union	£10,063	10.0%	£100,247	13.0%
Friends Provident	£9,919	9.7%	£106,188	13.4%
Scottish Provident	£9,508	8.9%	£94,820	12.7%

*With payments of £50 a month, maturing in 1998

If the policy is instead sold to someone else, a higher value can be had by selling the endowment through a market maker. For policyholders forced to cash in their policies, the message is straightforward. With endowments, you should never surrender.

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4/PERSONAL FINANCE

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BRIAN TORA



The art of self-defence for investors

We did not have to wait too long for a sharp reminder that Asian markets are a long way from having put last year's problems behind them. Hong Kong has had a very uncomfortable week as fears of more devaluation, corporate crashes and banking defaults gathered.

It is still remarkable how little knock-on effect this has had in developed markets. It would not do to exaggerate the effects but there will be some more direct consequences.

It is probably easier to pick the stocks and sectors to avoid rather than those which look certain to do well. Any business with exposure to the Far East looks likely to have a tough time and should be expunged from investment managers' portfolios. But you can add those companies which could be disadvantaged by cheap Asian imports in this country to the list.

I remain convinced that it will be right to be defensive during the months ahead. What exactly is a defensive sector? Well, it is one which might be termed in a raging bull market as being unexciting. In particular, those businesses and industries largely focussed on the domestic market are likely to have those defensive qualities that investment managers will be looking for in 1998. Aside from the fact that the strength of sterling has made the translation of overseas profits less attractive, there will be many exporters which, having hedged their position for 1997, will find themselves

more exposed to an expensive currency this year.

Among the traditionally defensive sectors, utilities and food retailers feature. It has not always been plain sailing for the food retailers, given that they have reached virtual saturation in their traditional markets. Personally, I would prefer utilities, despite possible regulatory interference. The two Scottish generators, ScottishPower and Scottish Hydro look good value, while United Utilities and Anglian Water also feature on our buy list.

Banks are also a defensive sector - at least those not exposed to Asian loans. Corporate activity seems set to continue, while the ability to cut costs out of these operations is considerable. Despite their good performance last year, companies like Abbey National, Bank of Scotland and Barclays should feature in any diversified portfolio.

Then there are the brewers. Again, they tend to be a fairly domestically orientated, although Bass recently announced an expansion of its hotel chain into Australia. If it is just UK exposure you are looking for, Whitbread seems the company, but Scottish & Newcastle also looks good value, although much depends on whether its Center Parcs operation in continental Europe starts to benefit from increased consumer expenditure.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton investment strategy committee.

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Northern Rock 0645 825 0200 6.25% to 7.24% 0.75% 1750

VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES

Scarborough BS 0693 131140 4.75% to 5.99% 0.75% 1250

Prudential 0800 8000001 5.00% to 5.99% 0.75% 2255

Bradford & Bingley BS 0600 270000 7.00% to 8.50% 0.75% 6 years Fix

FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES

Woolwich 0645 757575 4.65% to 11.00% 0.75% 2255

Bristol & West 0600 110055 5.00% to 11.00% 0.75% 2255

Scarborough BS 0693 131145 5.00% to 7.50% 0.75% 2255

FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES

Woolwich BS 0645 757575 2.45% to 1.99% 0.75% 2255

Prudential 0800 8000001 4.70% to 5.99% 0.75% 2255

Northumbria BS 0600 302010 6.00% to 8.50% 0.75% 1250 Fixed

UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS

Telephone APR % Max LTV Food monthly payments (£500 over 3 yrs)

UNSECURED

Northern Rock 0645 471421 8.5% N 185.13 2100.11

Direct Line 0161 800 9555 12.5% A 185.15 2100.11

Bank of Scotland 0800 211025 7.50% 185.15 2100.11

SECURED (SECOND CHARGE)

Cheshire Bank 0800 240024 4.7% N/A 185.15 to 2150 6 months to 25 years

Bank of Scotland 0800 121121 10.7% N/A 185.15 to 2150 3 years to maturity

First Direct 0345 1001001 11.2% N/A 185.15 to 2150 10 to 30 years

OVERDRAFTS

Telephone Card Type Min Income Rate % APR % Annual Fee Interest period

STANDARD

Cheshire Bank 0800 888877 185.15 0.25% N/A 185.15 to 2150

RBS Adverts 0800 077777 185.15 0.67% N/A 185.15 to 2150 50 days

Robert Potts/SAP 0800 821010 185.15 1.02% N/A 185.15 to 2150

GOLD CARDS

Capital One Bank 0800 692000 185.15 2.20% N/A 185.15 to 2150

Co-operative Bank 0465 212212 185.15 2.00% N/A 185.15 to 2150

RBS Adverts 0800 077777 185.15 2.00% N/A 185.15 to 2150

STORE CARDS

Telephone Payment by direct debit Payment by other methods



THE
JONATHAN DAVIES
COLUMN

The danger of being too bullish

Anyone who writes about stock markets on a regular basis is, as I remarked last week, liable to make mistakes. Error comes with the territory, and multiplies exponentially the further forward you look.

Some mistakes, however, are more egregious than others: my apologies therefore for the inadvertent statement in my column last week that the long-run real rate of return from the stock market has been 67 per cent per annum. Would it were so! The actual figure, of course, and the one I originally put in the column, before the gremlins struck, is 6 per cent to 7 per cent – and a very nice figure it is too, especially when compounded over a number of years. Nothing else in investment, as we know, beats the stock market for long-term capital appreciation.

Nothing alters the fact, either, that averages are averages and when they are exceeded consistently, they have to be followed by periods of less than average performance. Looking back on the year in the markets in 1997, we should be grateful for the fact that, while nearly all the market forecasters got the London and New York markets wrong, they at least erred on the right side – by underestimating what a good year it proved to be all round.

As the chart shows, it was a year when shares (as measured by the All Share index) produced a total real return of 23.6 per cent. (Total real return measures the combined return from dividends and capital appreciation, after allowing for the extent to which inflation has eroded the purchasing power of your investment.) This, to put it in context, is the 10th time in the past 16 years that the All Share index has produced a real return in excess of 20 per cent per annum.

Last year might have been a good one for the All Share index, but there have been six others which have been even better since 1980! Given that there have been only two years during the last 18 (1990 and 1994) when the All Share index has actually fallen, it is evident that we are living through

a bull market of quite remarkable length and intensity.

The average real total return from the All Share index since 1980, according to BZW, has been 19.4 per cent – that is almost three times the long-run historical average.

The record in the United States has been just as good. Given that many investors have never experienced a full-blown bear market, it is perhaps not surprising that the average mutual fund investor in the United States believes, according to consumer surveys, that putting his money into the stock mar-

ket is likely to produce an average capital gain of 30 per cent just next year, but every year into the future.

History and simple arithmetic, alas, tells us that this simply is not feasible – though it also tells us that there is nothing wrong in enjoying the good times while they last.

Just don't for prudence's sake, assume that they will last for ever. Like me, you are probably no great fan of insurance companies and have more than a little difficulty in understanding how the bonuses on your endowment and other policies are calculated. But the fact that many of the bigger providers are now cutting their annual reversionary bonuses, while paying out large and still handsome terminal bonuses, is not a surprise. They are right to warn that the exceptional market returns of the past 15 years are highly unlikely to persist for the next

15 years. In fact, I would go so far as to say that you would be unwise to invest with one which pretended otherwise.

Looking at the chart also shows two other things of interest. One is the now widely observed phenomenon that the stock market gains were not evenly distributed across the range of publicly quoted companies. The biggest companies, as measured by the FTSE 100 index, comfortably outperformed their medium and smaller company brethren in the FTSE 250 and small capitalisation indices, as they have

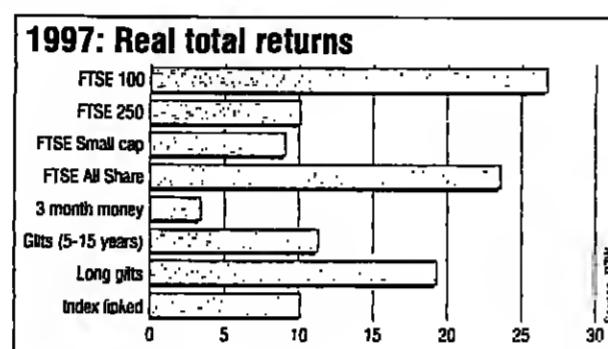
risk, someone faced with the choice between the two classes of asset a year ago would have been better advised to go for the safer gilts option.

Gilts also did well on an international comparison. They produced the highest returns of any of the large bond markets (including the United States, Germany, Japan and France). The election of a user-friendly Labour Government, and its prompt decision to hand over monetary policy to an independent Bank of England, was a crucial factor in underpinning the already favourable economic and inflation environment.

While short-term interest rates are rising, longer-term interest rates are still on a downward trend – in part reflecting the view that the new monetary policy arrangements are doing their job at ensuring that inflation does not rear its head again in the future (hence also the exceptional performance of index-linked gilts).

Is the gilts party over yet? Without wishing to predict another year as good as last year's, I have to say that I rather doubt it. Many of the fundamental arguments for gilts still look attractive, and the current financial crisis in the Far East hardly counts against them the worse it gets, the bigger the impact on the rest of the world, and the likelier it is that bond yields will fall.

Despite their strong recent performance, UK bond yields are still the highest of any country in Europe: although we are committed to staying out of the first wave of European monetary union, there are reasons to expect that our bond yields will continue to converge with those that are signing up for that high-risk enterprise. And while short-term inflationary pressures are clearly rising, I cannot for the moment see any real clouds on the longer-term horizon. My only worry is that many institutional investors seem to be thinking the same way – and one prefers not, in this business, to be part of a consensus view, since the one thing we do know is that consensus expectations, like consensus forecasts, never come true.



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The other feature to note is the strong performance of gilts. They may have been overshadowed by the exceptional performance of the stock market, but I am happy to say (having ventured to praise their merits on several occasions) that 1997 was also a quite excellent year for gilts too. Real returns of 19.3 per cent for long-dated gilts, 11.3 per cent for shorter maturities and 10.8 per cent on index-linked made it one of the best years in recent memory: only 1982 and 1993 produced clearly higher real returns. Even though, in practice, the stock market has done better in the past 12 months, I stick to my view that, adjusting for

done for most of the 1990s.

The so-called small cap revival which is always expected to materialise in the later stages of a bull market has yet to appear, though it will probably do eventually.

Nearly all insurers have 24-hour helplines, but it is worth checking. A survey for Cornhill found that 40 per cent of people were unaware that their insurer had such helplines.

Emergency repairs are the first issue faced by victims of storm damage. The Association of British Insurers (ABI), the industry trade body, advises that reasonable costs of temporary emergency repairs will generally be paid by insurance companies.

The ABI interprets "reasonable

costs" as being those needed to stop any damage getting worse. However, for repairs over £500 it recommends insurance companies should always be contacted before the work is undertaken.

Temporary repairs carried out by the DIY inclined should also be covered. If you board up windows or hire water extractors, for example, keep the receipts – they could form part of your claim.

In a worst case scenario, when your home becomes uninhabitable, insurers should cover the costs of temporary accommodation. This too is often qualified by the word "reasonable" – do not expect a five-star hotel. Accommodation should take into account the quality of your home, however.

With emergencies over, you can start to look at the issue of permanent repairs to property, but beware. If you've suffered from the storms then cowboys

may head your way in a gold rush of their own. Mark Barratt, chairman of the National Federation of Builders, warns that "unscrupulous 'cowboy' builders always try to take advantage of home owners shocked and battered by violent weather". He recommends using a reputable builder from a recognised trade association. Many insurers have lists of such builders in your area.

Flooding is another serious problem. Flooded houses need drying, but drying things too quickly causes further damage. Leave the windows open until mid-afternoon if the weather permits – the air is drier outside. But leave the heating off while windows are open to save energy.

Doors and drawers should be opened and you should also clear air bricks of any debris. Dehumidifiers are good for flooded houses as they dry the

All those on the shareholder's register at that time will be entitled to the scrip issue. Five to 10 days afterwards the shares will be quoted "ex scrip" on the market. This means that the price of the shares has been adjusted for the issue. The letters "xc", where "c" stands for "capitalisation", will appear after the price of the shares quoted in the press.

As soon as the new certificates are ready, they will be mailed to shareholders. Those wishing to sell their entire holding before their new certificate arrives can do so, for stockbrokers will be aware of the situation. However, it must be made clear when the sale is

It defies logic, but if you look at shares you will notice prices are generally under 1,000p

structions are given that you wish to sell "old" shares, which are equivalent to a certain number of "new" shares. When the new certificate arrives, it must be forwarded to the broker who dealt with the sale.

Investors who sell shares before the "records date" are not entitled to the scrip issue. Should the company's share register not have been updated in time and consequently a share certificate for the "new" shares is received, this must be forwarded to the broker who handled the sale.

It is only when shares in a company are bought or sold during the period of the scrip issue that matters become complicated. Your broker will always be pleased to answer any questions that you have and to give guidance.

How to weather storm damage to your property this winter



If your home is one of those lashed by the storms of the past week, what should you do? Guy Dennis makes some suggestions.

Andrew Wilkinson was in bed when his house started collapsing around his ears. "A terrific crash woke me up. I went to the window and saw my chimney in the garden and there was debris everywhere. The chimney came down in the 1987 storms as well and I can't believe it's happened again."

His home in Selsey, West Sussex, sustained damage estimated at £18,000 as a result of a freak tornado two days ago. Luckily, he was insured and his repair bills will be paid by his insurer, Cornhill. As storms swept across the UK this

week causing an estimated £50m of damage, others may not be so lucky. What should you do if you are similarly affected? Be ready to talk: this is the basic advice from insurance companies to their policyholders. In other words, as soon as possible after your home is damaged by storms, you should contact your insurance company.

Nearly all insurers have 24-hour helplines, but it is worth checking. A survey for Cornhill found that 40 per cent of people were unaware that their insurer had such helplines.

Emergency repairs are the first issue faced by victims of storm damage. The Association of British Insurers (ABI), the industry trade body, advises that reasonable costs of temporary emergency repairs will generally be paid by insurance companies.

The ABI interprets "reasonable

air without causing heat damage. They should be used with the windows closed.

Damaged furniture and fittings should be stored in a dry place as they will need to be inspected and may have a salvage value even if irreparable.

Floors may also need to be looked at: suspended wooden floors need ventilating and floorboards may have to be lifted to dry the floor thoroughly. A dehumidifier may be useful here.

The wide-scale nature of the damage has led to mounting claims from insurance companies. The ABI believes total costs amount to £300m to £400m for the storms since Christmas Eve, while other estimates are even higher.

And it may get worse. The message from insurers, both in the long and short term is: be prepared for more of the same. The storms we have seen this winter are not yet over.

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So, have the experts anything to be proud of? Well, yes

Just over a year ago, 'The Independent' asked five top independent financial advisers to take on several hypothetical investors. Twelve months on, Nic Cutti discovers how savers would have fared with each adviser and then carries out the acid test: double or quits.

They always seem to sit in padded leather chairs that bob about as they speak, they talk confidently about markets, sectors and what have you. But when chips are down, are independent financial advisers really any good at advising their clients?

Last year, *The Independent* created different scenarios for five advisers and gave them each a notional £10,000 to look after. The aim was – and is – not to make them look stupid by comparing them to each other but to see how well they met their clients' needs.

We also assumed that savers would not only want their investments to be reviewed at the end of the year but, to complicate matters further, they might also have a further £10,000 to tuck away this year. Here's what three members of our panel suggested. Next week, the spotlight turns on our two remaining financial advisers.



'Consider reducing a mortgage'

Phillipa Gee, of Gee & Company

Phillipa Gee, at Gee & Company in Shrewsbury, was aiming for long-term growth for a couple with a relatively conservative investment strategy, but with a slight element of risk. She chose to place £5,000 in Schroder's UK Equity Fund, and £4,000 in Invesco's European Growth Fund, which are both pebble. A further £1,000 went into Fidelity's Latin America Fund.

As at the end of December, the Schroder fund stood at £5,556.46, Invesco's £4,000 was up £600.12 and Fidelity's fund stood at £1,230. In all, the gain was £13.85 per cent after charges, many of



A head start: Investing for future school fees is long-term aim and emerging market funds could be considered

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

which would have been rebated back to the client anyway, as Gee & Co operates on a fee-paying basis.

Phillipa says: "Both the Schroder and Invesco recommendations have continued to meet the criteria they were given last year, while the Latin American fund ended the year on a more volatile point. Nevertheless, it met the intention of taking only one tenth of the investment and produced the strongest growth.

"Our aim is to achieve long-term growth by retaining the holdings already recommended and building on the existing investments to develop the portfolio further.

"This year, we would recommend £3,000 into the Mercury Eastern European Fund. This is denominated in German marks and carries both some currency and equity risk. To provide exposure to fixed interest holdings and balance this, we would recommend £5,000 be invested into the Aberdeen Fixed Interest unit trust, which is pebble. The aim is to produce a relatively high income, which is reinvested.

"Finally, M&G have had a troubled few years but have since made various changes to their funds. We recommend £2,000 into M&G's Growth fund, which is pebble. One final point, is that with interest rates

likely to rise slightly this year, investors could consider reducing their mortgages with part of the lump sum available and channel part of their monthly savings into the various investments."



'Good prospects in Europe'

Bhupinder Anand at Anand Associates

Bhupinder Anand, a former IFA of the Year, is based at Anand Associates, in central London. For a couple also seeking long-term growth but willing to accept much more risk, he suggested £3,500 into Schroder's Far Eastern Growth unit trust, plus a further £3,500 into Baring Europe Select and a final £3,000 into Johnson Fry's Slater UK Growth unit trust.

Johnson Fry's fund showed gains of 21.4 per cent over 1997, while Barings delivered returns of 16.1 per cent. Sadly, this excellent performance was let down by Far Eastern markets, leaving Schroder down by

20.25 per cent. In all, Bhupinder's £10,000 delivered net gains of £670, which, as he stoutly maintains, is still better than a building society account.

He says: "Generally, two of the three main investments have delivered well and I would not touch them. The Far East has not been good. But while I would not recommend investing more in that area, I think we should view this fund as a long-term investment over at least five to seven years.

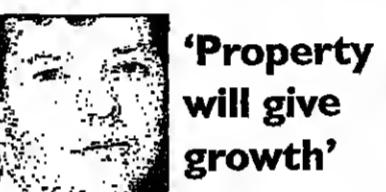
"As for the next £10,000, I would suggest a further £3,000 into the Johnson Fry fund. It is a long-term performer, with a strong analytical bias, which should do well even in a volatile market. It also has significant exposure to smaller companies, which many people feel should begin to catch up with larger-cap stocks this year.

"Next, I would put £4,000 into Old Mutual's European Growth fund. There are good prospects in Europe and Old Mutual, a consistently good performance in this area, tends to look at equity stocks and would be a good counterbalance to the Barings fund.

"Third, would recommend £2,000 into the Henderson Global Technology fund. This is quite a volatile fund, one that in a

real exposure you might switch in and out of. This year, I think, is a time to be in.

"Finally, I would suggest £1,000 in the First Russian Investment Trust, offered by a fund manager called Pictet. This is a bit of a gamble. But research by the fund managers shows the share price of some of the companies is less than 1 per cent of their net asset values. The share prices simply do not reflect their resources. Clearly this is a volatile investment. But investors whom I placed in this fund over the past year or so have shown returns over 100 per cent."



'Property will give growth'

Roddy Kohn, an IFA at Kohn Cougar, in Bristol, who is also on the board of the financial advisers' watchdog, the Personal Investment Authority, was there to help a younger couple who wanted to save for the year.

children's future education needs. They did not need access to their funds for at least six or seven years.

He recommended just two stocks, Bankers' Investment Trust from Henderson Investors, a pebble fund in which he suggested £5,000 should be placed. His other selection was Kleinwort Benson's Charter Investment Trust, also pebble, for an equal amount.

The Henderson fund would have been worth £5,965, with net income reinvested at the beginning of January, a rise of almost 20 per cent, while Kleinwort's investment trust delivered gains of 23.37 per cent, rising in value to £5,168.71.

Roddy says: "I think this couple should keep their first £10,000 where it is. Both funds have some way to go and there is a danger in constantly switching in that you incur initial charges whenever you do so.

"But for the next £10,000, I would advise £3,000 to go into a M&G Corporate Bond PEP with income reinvested. This is a defensive strategy for what may be a more volatile year investment-wise.

"A further £4,000 could go into the TR Property Trust, which is also pebble. I think property will give good growth over the next 18 months or so, while also enhancing the same defensive strategy, acting as a balance to last year's investments and this year's remaining selection.

"For the last £3,000, I would recommend some exposure to emerging markets. Therefore, £1,000 should go into Templeton's Latin American trust, with the same amounts into Fleming's Chinese Investment Trust and Fidelity Asian Values. All of these funds have been knocked sideways in the past few months and there is the prospect of long-term recovery in each case.

"However, it may be that there will be further weaknesses in months to come. It may make more sense to keep the remaining £3,000 in a high-interest deposit account and either invest in a few months, or dribble the money in gradually over the year."

Next week: Kean Seager at Whitechurch Securities, in Bristol, and Cherry Dodd, at Bradford & Bingley's IFA arm, give their tips for 1998.

BARGAIN BASEMENT

Capital One, the credit card issuer, is offering a Visa card pegged at 6.9 per cent APR until January 1999, when it reverts to 17.9 per cent APR. The card has no annual fee, automatic balance transfer option and up to 54 days

interest free credit. Call 0800 669000.

Flemings, the investment trust specialist, is offering investors a 40 per cent discount on the fee they would normally be charged for selling shares in National

Power and Powergen and reinvesting the proceeds in one of the company's 19 trusts. The charge of £12.50 falls to £7.50 until the end of the month, with combined household sales charged £7.50. Call 0500 500161.

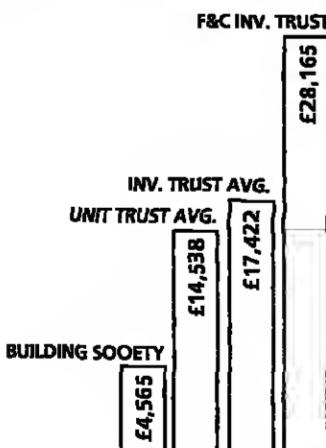
Barclaycard is launching a 24-hour telephone "travel shop" which guarantees that if a pack-

age holiday or cruise is found cheaper within seven days of being booked through its service, the card issuer will match the price. Call 0870 8408000.

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7/PERSONAL FINANCE

II, yes
Avoid being mauled by the tiger economies

The next 12 months could be a fertile period for investors, but there's an injured tiger loose in the garden. While prospects look reasonable in the developed Western economies, the Asian tigers, with their economic problems, could still hurt the unwary. Guy Dennis reports on investment prospects in 1998.

The worst news from the Far East may have been and gone but the dangers are not over, warn fund managers. Some argue that the repercussions of the past few months' economic turmoil may still take time to impact fully and there could be further problems from the region.

"Our starting point [globally] is what's happening in Asia, which in terms of investment influences in the coming year is probably going to be the single most important in terms of what happens to equities," says Richard Urwin, head of economic research at Gartmore.

Clearly, the Far East itself is a risky bet, but with possible repercussions for the rest of the world, caution is needed. The three main contenders for investment are the UK, Europe and the USA.

The UK and Europe are investment front-runners, although neither is likely to rise dramatically and there is debate over which will deliver better returns. Europe has much to commend it, with companies there expected to deliver good returns.

Simon Key, chief investment officer at Franklin, explains: "There is a fundamental change in the way that European companies are being run. The restructuring that's going on in European countries in anticipation of economic and monetary union - and also because of shareholder activism - means that companies are being run more in the interests of shareholders."

However, others argue that the problem with Europe is that many of its advantages may have been anticipated and potential future gains in share prices may already have been factored in.

Andrea McNee, investment director at Britannia Investment Managers, says this is a key factor favouring the UK. "The UK probably looks the best in terms

of valuation. Although Europe probably has reasonably strong earnings flows coming up, it's actually priced in fairly fully."

She expects the UK's FTSE 100 share index to rise to 5,500 by the end of 1998 and a similar figure is predicted by NatWest Stockbrokers, where Jeremy Batstone, head of research, forecasts "5,500 or 5,600, so if you add dividend payments on top of that we're looking at a total return of maybe 11 or 12 per cent. So, a good but noo-vintage year."

The UK and Europe may look stronger, but investors should not ignore the USA. It may not appear so attractive, as expectations of corporate profits decrease, but it still offers opportunities. Investing in the USA spreads risk, and its huge domestic market may be less plagued by the Asian turmoil. It should also be seen as a long-term investment prospect.

"There may also be interesting opportunities in specific sectors. Andrew Barker, chairman of the Association of Investment Trust Companies and director of Foreign and Colonial Investment Trusts, points to healthcare and financial services as areas which could do well in the US this year. There may also be opportunities in the smaller companies sector - the huge domestic market allows small firms to grow rapidly."

There has been some talk of a possible revival in the UK for less highly-capitalised companies. Last year the FTSE index of top 100 companies massively outperformed the small and mid-market sectors. Despite this hoped-for revival in the small companies sector in 1998, some experts doubt whether any outperformance will match the growth in the FTSE 100 index compared to smaller stocks last year.

Investors should be careful, as Mr Batstone, of NatWest Stockbrokers, explains: "In general, you would expect smaller and medium-cap companies to do reasonably well, but we are being very cautious about those two and would suggest that investors stick to those small caps that seem to have a niche in their chosen area of activity."

"The market is in no mood to take prisoners with small caps as with large caps so if a smaller company comes out with a profits warning then that company is panned by the markets. One has to be selective and the golden rule for investors in these sectors is if you're not sure, then reduce your risk by spreading your portfolio."

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The lure of cheap markets

While most investors will view the Asian economies with caution, and as a potential menace to world stock markets, some may be inclined to see the Far East as a bargain basement. If this applies to you, then beware.

Richard Urwin, head of research at Gartmore, warns: "In straight valuation terms many Asian markets look cheap. They look cheap on historic earnings. [Their prices relative to earnings] are quite low at present but we think you're going to see substantial declines in earnings in a number of [Far Eastern] countries and the potentially attractive valuations you're looking at are spurious in reality."

Of course, buying into Far Eastern markets when they reach rock bottom could offer huge returns, but

knowing when the markets have bottomed is the million dollar question; nobody has the answer yet.

Emerging markets elsewhere may offer a better bet if you want to risk some money for possible high returns. Latin America is a favourite among experts. One economist suggests that the lack of research in certain areas of Latin America might mean that gains there have yet to be anticipated.

Investors should be careful in 1998, and should do their best to avoid the problems of Asia. Tigers are camouflaged - it gives them an element of surprise. Investors for 1998 should act carefully, if they want to avoid surprises. If they do so they could see reasonable returns.

- Guy Dennis

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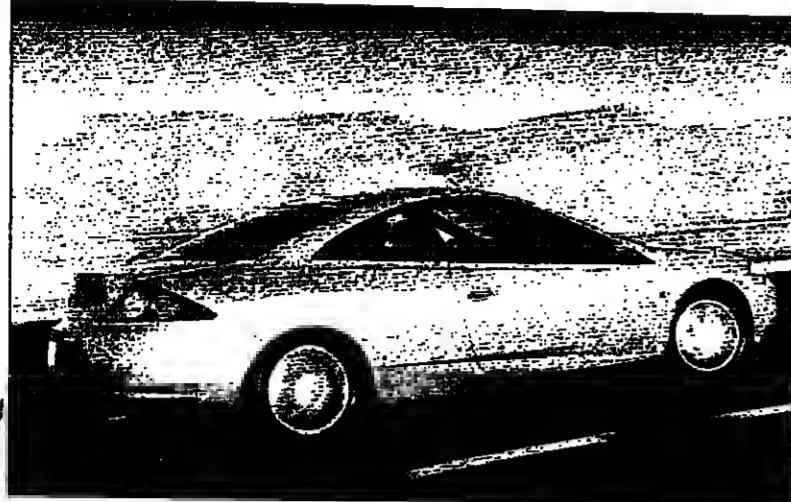
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the Ford
Cougar,
far left,
Chrysler
Chrono,
left, and
VW's
reinvention
of the
classic
Beetle,
below

ROAD TEST: DAIHATSU CUORE

Daihatsu's Cuore has a tricky name, a diminutive three-cylinder engine and comical perpendicular styling. As daft as it seems? Not quite, says Roger Bell.

At £6,500, the three-door Cuore is the cheapest Japanese-made car you can buy in Britain. Suzuki's low-cost oddball, the Wagon R, costs £750 more, and its £6,175 Alto is made in India. Kia Pride? Nope. Mazda's hand-me-down now hauls from troubled Korea.

Since it's Japanese, you can probably take for granted the Cuore's quality and reliability; three-year, unlimited mileage warranties are not lightly given. Exceptional economy is also central to the Cuore's appeal to marginal motorists: by any standards, 64.2mpg in the extra-urban cycle is pretty parsimonious. So is 53mpg in the combined cycle.

Manoeuvrability is another asset. Being short, and pinched-in at the hips – this is a micro K-class car designed for Tokyo congestion – the dinky Daihatsu will slot into gaps too small for superminis such as the Ford Fiesta and the Vauxhall Corsa. Even Ford's excellent Ka, which is not really a city dodgem, looks comparatively corpulent.

The evergreen Mini would be a close rival, had Rover not pushed it upmarket with a silly £9,000 price tag. So it is Fiat's chic Cinquecento – 3in shorter, a couple of inches wider and appreciably heavier than the Daihatsu – that provides the Cuore's closest European competition.

Both cars make a virtue of being small. They need to, as Skoda's admirable Felicia is not only cheaper but considerably bigger and roomier than either of these micros.

Lightness (630kg, 12.4cwt) may not be conducive to crash safety, but it allows the Cuore's modest 850cc, 42 horsepower engine to punch above its size. Acceleration is nippy within urban limits, though overtaking calls for long-range planning – and often a couple of downshifts. Rev hard, and a noisy boom assails the ears. Lavish sound insulation was not in the Cuore's design script. Nor were big-car refinement and comfort.

Although intended as a local runabout, the Cuore acquires itself surprisingly well on motorways because of its loping gait in overdrive fifth. Given a top speed of 85mph, law-abiding drivers will have no trouble holding a mid-range station.

Whatever you think of the styling, it's not so weird as that of the Move, a five-door oddity that shares the pert Cuore's underpinnings and drivetrain. Up front, there's no shortage of room for two broad adults. Even in the back, there's more space than you'd expect to find in a car so small. Access to the extendable boot is through a top-hinged tailgate.

Ride comfort takes a back seat in this stiffly sprung micro, which bobbles and jerks on all but the smoothest roads. There are two sides to the car's handling. Steering is so sensitive at speed that the car seems to dart through corners as if guided by telepathy. Smoothness and delicacy are the watchwords if you're to avoid exposing a slightly nervous disposition. There's no evidence of this hypersensitivity around town, though. In fact you have to twirl the wheel quite energetically to park.

Daihatsu has kept the Cuore's price down by restricting equipment. Although you get a driver's airbag, side-impact bars, a folding rear bench and an engine immobiliser, you have to work the windows and locks manually on the three-door. Even the radio's extra.

Beetles top the Motown charts

The Detroit Motor Show is usually treated as a fanfare for America's motoring giants. This year, however, Uncle Sam was upstaged by VW's reborn Beetle, as Gavin Green reports.

Volkswagen's New Beetle, successor to the only good thing that came out of Germany in the Thirties, finally made its public debut at this week's Detroit Motor Show, after four years of hype.

Visually similar but mechanically miles apart from the original Beetle – conceived by Adolf Hitler and Ferdinand Porsche as a "people's car" – the New Beetle is a VW-Golf-based "designer" car aimed at those who want to cut a dash, while also conveying a friendly, smiling image. VW describes the new car as "optimism on wheels" and it will be marketed as a cult lifestyle accessory for those who want some motion in their transport.

This is just as well, for, although it's a cheerful little thing and will no doubt sell well, it has little practical virtue. The Beetle-like styling, with the fall-away rear, gives virtually no rear headroom for adults, and a tiny boot. The price will be slightly higher than that of a similarly sized Golf, further reducing the reasons to buy it. In the UK, where sales start early next year, prices will start from about £14,000 – a lot, for a piece of cute automotive jewellery. Even Volkswagen admits the car is all about style rather than function – unlike the original Beetle, which was designed to motorise Germany. It at least shows that VW, Germany's dour, most utilitarian car maker, has at last developed a sense of humour.

The new

Beetle looks almost identical with the "Concept One" design study, styled in VW's California studio, that was first shown at the Detroit Show four years ago. Since then, the Concept One has toured the world motor show circuit, to drum up publicity for the New Beetle. Once the green light was given, development shifted from California to Germany.

Concept One creator J Mays, former head of VW's Californian studio, was given no credit for the car at either the Detroit press conference or in subsequent interviews with VW high-ups. This is because he no longer works for the VW group. Three months ago he took up the top design job at Ford. Ford also kept him under wraps at the Detroit Show, lest he end up talking more about a new Volkswagen than upcoming new Fords.

The New Beetle shares no parts with the old Beetle. It doesn't even have that car's most famous mechanical feature, a rear engine. Instead, the two engines on offer – a 2.0-litre 115bhp four and a 1.9-litre 90bhp turbo-diesel – are both front-mounted and drive the front wheels. A 150bhp V5 engine will go on sale later. Most other mechanical parts, including the suspension, steering, brakes and transmissions, are also Golf-based. This has greatly reduced VW's development costs. The car has been created largely for the American market, where Volkswagen sales have

plummeted since the halcyon days of the original Beetle. Back in the late Sixties, VW was selling half a million cars a year in North America, almost all of them Beetles. Last year, it sold 150,000 cars.

The New Beetle certainly won't send VW sales rocketing back to the level of 30 years ago. VW expects to sell 50,000 a year in North America, and the same again for the rest of the world.

All New Beetles will be made at VW's Mexican factory in Puebla, which already sources US-bound Golfs and Jetta. The factory, once noted for its dodgy build quality, has been completely overhauled to ensure that New Beetle reliability will be at least as good as that of the old Beetle.

One firm link with the past is that New Beetle production will run alongside that of the old. Mexico is now the only country to continue to build the old timer, for the Mexican and South American markets; it is still the biggest-selling car in history. The New Beetle was undoubtedly the focus of Detroit, but the Yanks did at least have the odd home-grown product to cheer about. Most impressive new production car – rather more impressive than the Beetle, in fact – was the Ford Cougar, a Mondeo-based coupe that goes on sale in Europe this summer. It's a sharp, handsome machine, looking rather like a big brother to the Ford Puma coupe, and offers a choice of 2.0-litre

four or 2.5-litre V6 engines. Prices start at £18,000. The V6 will cost about £21,000. The US-made Cougar replaces the slow-selling, absurdly named Ford Probe.

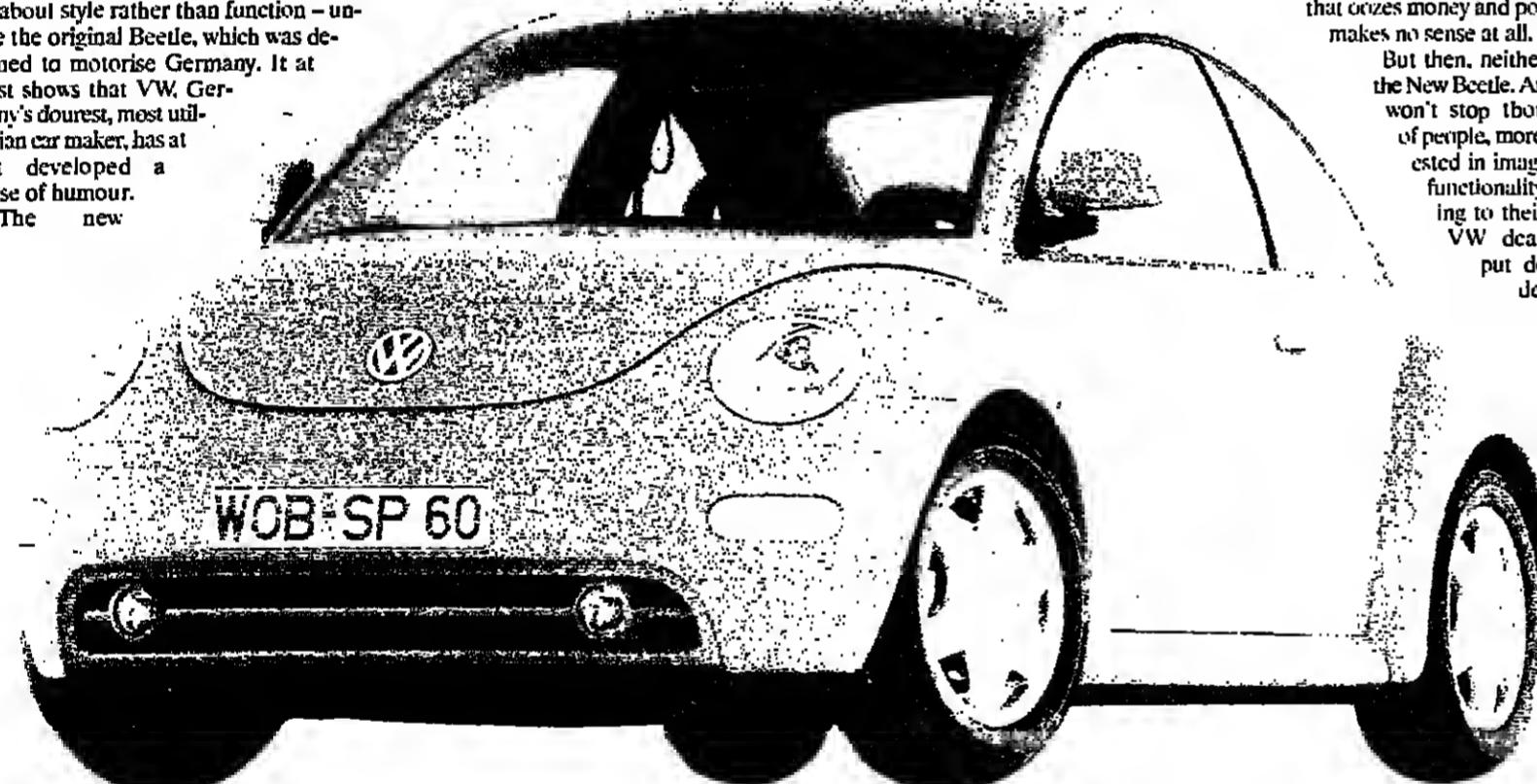
Lexus' Toyota's upmarket wing, unveiled its Range Rover rival, a 4x4 that is probably the most car-like off-roader we've ever seen, and is bound further to end Land Rover's one-time dominance of the top-end 4x4 market. Honda unveiled a replacement for its Shuttle MPV. Saab has face-lifted the 900 and changed the name to 9-3, and the Yanks had the usual sprinkling of new gas-guzzling pick-up trucks and huge off-roaders, while making a lot of noise about their research into the eco-friendly cars of the future.

Detroit is traditionally about brave-looking, albeit often irrelevant, "concept" cars, and Chrysler traditionally provides the lion's share of the entertainment. This year it had three concept vehicles. The most interesting was a cross between an open sports car and a 4x4: the Jeepster. The adjustable suspension raises the car to clear rocks and verges. Otherwise, it's a chunky ground-hugger with huge tyres. It may go into production.

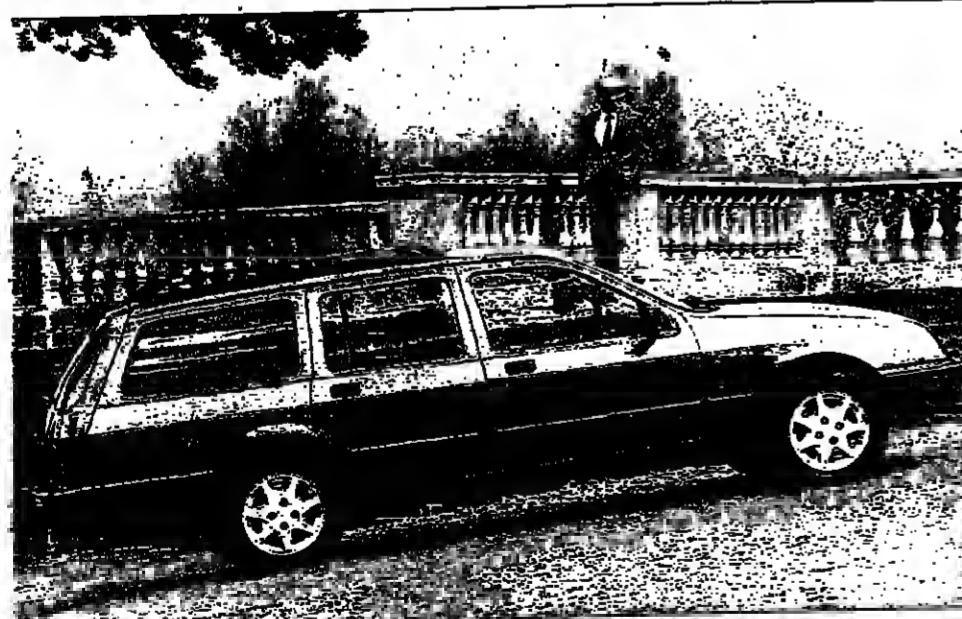
So may a Porsche Boxster-lookalike, mid-engined, plastic-bodied roadster – the Plymouth Pronto Spyder – which would be sold for half the price of the Porsche.

There was also a vast saloon called the Chrysler Chrono. It has a huge body, a tiny cockpit, and as much street presence as a road-going ocean liner. It looks fabulous, an old-fashioned, ostentatious Yank that oozes money and power. It makes no sense at all.

But then, neither does the New Beetle. And that won't stop thousands of people, more interested in functionality, racing to their local VW dealer to put down a deposit.



MY WORST CAR CHAS MCDEVITT'S FORD SIERRA ESTATE



Estate of the art:
with more than
200,000 miles on
the clock, Chas McDevitt's
Sierra developed an
allergy to water

The funny thing is that every car I've ever owned has been my worst car. I believe in getting value for money and that means buying a cheap car then running it into the ground. I rarely have to pay more than £1,000 and then run the car to at least 50,000 miles. For instance, I bought a Ford Escort for £1,200 which had covered 10,000 miles. I ran it up to 280,000 miles and sold it for £200, so 200,000 miles' worth of motoring for £1,000 isn't bad is it?

I honestly don't think that my cars are any less reliable than hand-new ones, although the breakdowns are more memorable. A few years ago I was driving back in the early hours of the morning from a Warrors Rats charity function and giving a lift to Frankie Vaughan and Joe Brown. I dropped

off Frankie, but on the way to Joe's place in the countryside my multi-million-mile Ford Sierra estate cut out on a T-junction. It was a filthy night, and I think my big mistake was driving through a puddle which drowned the electrics. We waited for an hour before another car passed by and they let us use their mobile to call Joe Brown's roadside to come and rescue us. He turned up in a big Citroen with a set of jump leads. Its alarm went off, lights flashed and locked us out. Now there were two stranded cars.

Eventually the police stopped, taking the roadie and Joe back to his house, so that they could break in and find the spare keys for the Citroen. Meanwhile, I went off in search of a phone box to call the AA.

After ruining my Yves Saint Laurent suit

I got back to the Sierra and it started. I met the rescue truck a few miles later, said I was fine, then seconds later the car died again. This time I put a bin liner on and started to walk towards civilisation ... gave up, went back to sleep in the car. And it started. Meanwhile, Joe Brown had sent the roadside out on a fruitless mission to find me some sandwiches and hot tea. The Sierra had to go, Jimmy the Sniff sold me a Vauxhall Cavalier estate for £340 and Joe Brown refused to get in a car with me for the next two years.

Chas McDevitt and his skiffle group had global success in 1987 with 'Straight Train'. His book 'Skiffle: The Roots of UK Rock' is published by Robson Books. He was talking to James Ruppert.

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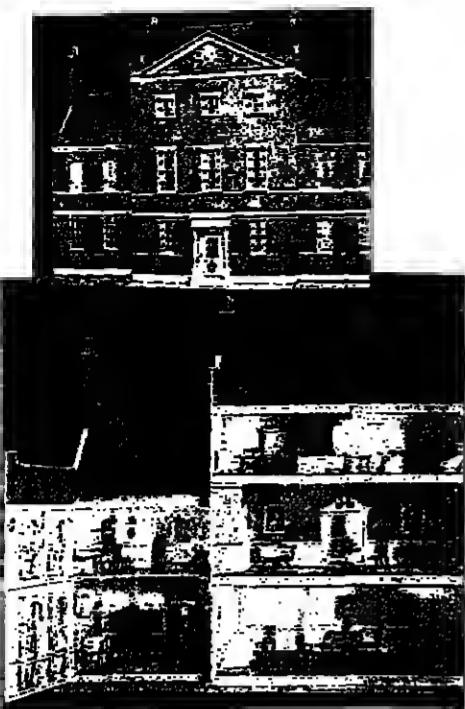
Voice Personals appears in The Independent each Saturday in the Time Off section and in the Independent on Sunday in the Real Life section.

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SL 11K	1,000	J0N 255	1,000	RBR 938	1,000
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SL 11V	1,000	J0Z 255	1,000	RBR 938	1,000
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10/PROPERTY

AT HOME/THE SQUEEZE



A little bit like Belgravia

The smallest ever freehold – and one of the cheapest – to come on the market with the up-market estate agents Savills is for sale at £20,000, including all the contents.

But you would have to shrink more than the kids to fit into it. Seven-ooe inches wide, by 74 inches high, it is an exact replica of part of Island Hall, Godmanchester, in Cambridgeshire.

No detail has been ignored; the minute inkwells and candelabras are silver, the saucer is copper and the kitchen table drawers contain cutlery. A four-poster bed is covered with 18th century silk and beside nanny's bed is a glass of water with false teeth in it. The mahogany desk, with cross bands and inlay, brass castors and dovetail joints, cost £800. Cheval glass wardrobe and tiny coat hangers complete the bedrooms.

"Like any property, we've worked out the pounds per square foot," says Clare Berry of Savills. "In this case, per square inch. It's roughly £598 per sq ft, directly comparable to prices in Belgravia or Knightsbridge."

Short on space? Welcome to the fold

A few days ago property mania reached what most non-Londoners would consider an all-time peak of silliness when a "studio" little bigger than an airing cupboard sold for £72,500. Rosalind Russell considers how a home that size can be furnished.

Even though it has a fancy address in Egerton Gardens, Knightsbridge, the lease on the studio has less than 18 years to run. At 10ft 9ins by 10ft 9ins – including kitcheneette and shower cubicle – the studio is destined to be used as staff accommodation. Presumably by someone who has no friends, as it would be a tight squeeze to have anyone round for a meal. Or would it? A lack of space in most modern homes has encouraged designers to produce furniture and fittings that make the most of what we have.

Double-function furniture makes a space seem more than it is. The Scorpio unit by Stompa cleverly combines a bunk bed with a pull-out double sofa bed beneath, plus a desk. The unit costs from £849, depending on finish. From the same firm, the Uoo unit combines a bunk bed with a chair underneath, pulling out to a single bed, with a bigger desk which can take a PC. It costs from £700.

Homebase's troll clip spotlight (£9.99) would fit on easily, taking up less room than a desk or bedside light, or its floor chrome-effect spotlight can make itself very slim and inconspicuous at £34.99. Habitat's Slumber is not a pull-out, but a sofa with a proper sprung mattress, with bolster cushions. It is covered with pique cotton in ink, moss green or yellow at £449, or more if you choose a made-to-order fabric. A similar idea, but very ornate, is a folding cast-iron bed from Pukka Palace (£295 without the mattress).

Another ingenious Pukka offering is a library chair which folds over to turn into a set of steps (£128). Habitat's Lorelei folding chairs have a metal frame

with resin slats and come in cheery orange, green, blue or white, at £35 each and look smart with the Lennox folding table. Seating four when extended, it can fold to put against the wall and costs £199.

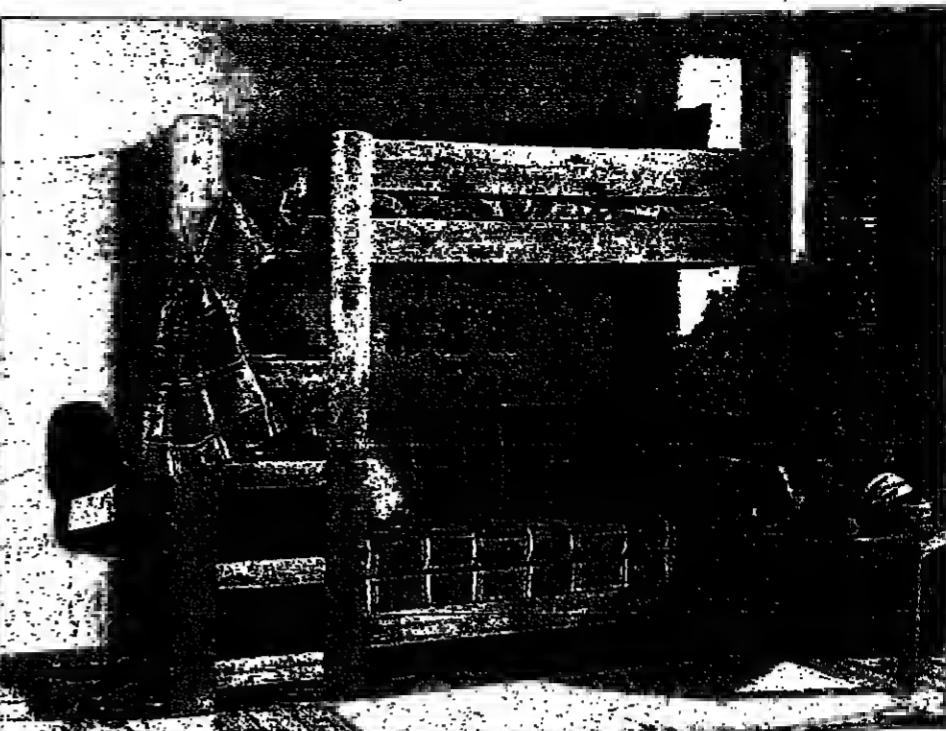
With such as tiny space, you do not want to lose wall space to a radiator. Myson's Kickspace 600 is as powerful as a radiator, but fits neatly in the dead space beneath a kitchen or bathroom unit. With a flick of a switch, in summer it blows out cool air instead of warm. It comes in a variety of colours and finishes, including stainless steel and costs from £135.

Habitat's Lily kitchen range of free-standing units works on the principle of a work surface with adjustable legs allowing a washing machine or dishwasher to be fitted in alongside cupboards. Prices start at £95 for a worktop. Bhs makes a wooden kitchen cart on castors which can be moved around easily, but also provides an impressive amount of useful extras like pull-out board, drawer, removable tray, towel rail, enclosed knife block, storage shelf and six bottle wine rack. It is delivered fully assembled, with a tin of wood treatment oil, via the mail order catalogue at £150.

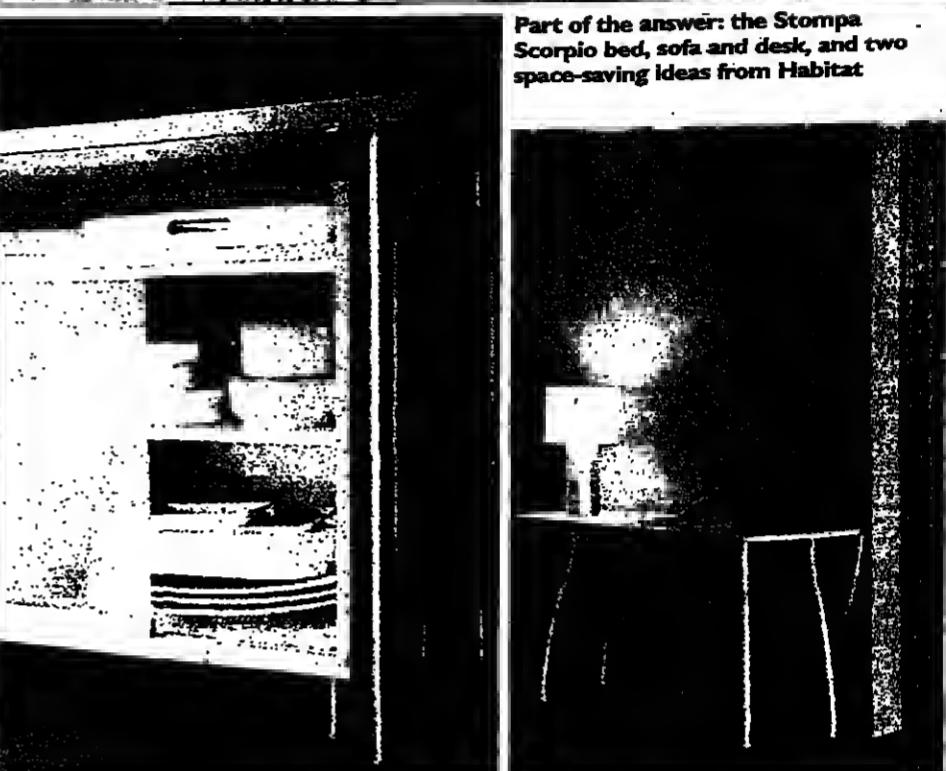
Joanna Wood, an interior designer who has worked for the Garrick Club and the Grosvenor Estate, has no time for the timid approach.

"I would build everything in to make it look like a study with fake bookcases along the walls," she suggests. "It would be very James Bond: you press a button and the fake bookcases come down to reveal the bed and the tiny fridge (to keep the champagne in). It is quite easy to buy these from builder's merchants." Colours, she says, should be bold, strong blues, yellow and lots of white. "I wouldn't do all neutral because then the room really would look like a shoebox. It should be very masculine, very Ralph Lauren with paisley, plaids and plains. With modern low voltage ceiling lights and a large mirror opposite the window, you get lots of light."

Stompa 01274 596885; Homebase 0645 801 800; Myson 0345 697509; Habitat 0645 334437; Pukka Palace 01588 672999; Bhs mail order catalogue.



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11/PROPERTY

The beastly buyers who ask to enter early

The buyer of a dilapidated property may want early access to get a head start on vital repairs. The seller, confident in the buyer's integrity and his contractual safeguards, may be amenable. To the seller's solicitor, though, any risk at all should be avoided. Granting early access, Robert Liebman has learned, is inherently risky.

Some buyers request, even demand, access to begin refurbishing a property after they have exchanged contracts but before completion. Long-neglected and even derelict properties, especially those which are repossessions or in the hands of executors, are likely candidates.

Once contracts have been exchanged, many sellers are willing to comply with such requests, bolstered by the deposit in their pockets, the contract in their solicitor's safe, and the buyer's insurance policies. A solicitor worth his shekels, however, will insist that it ain't over until the fat lady sings.

"Normally, if a buyer wants early access, I would encourage them to complete sooner," says Edward Bliss, residential property solicitor with the central London firm Maples Teesdale. Early access should be denied whenever possible.

It is not always possible. Plumbing, a common culprit, might need fixing or might not even exist. "A property with no bathroom at all would be unsuitable for human habitation, and we might insist on at least some work before completion," a Halifax spokesperson says. An insistent buyer might make early access a condition of the sale, and an executor of an unmodernised property might

desperately want to clinch a deal. Lenders and solicitors alike agree that, if early access is granted, the property should be vacant and contracts already exchanged. "The seller has full legal rights to have the property back," Mr Bliss says. "Nevertheless, the danger is if the buyers refuse to move out or return the keys, it might be necessary to enforce the seller's legal rights by taking the matter to court. This is time-consuming and costly, and always contains an element of risk for the seller."

In granting early access, Mr Bliss insists on "various minimum requirements. The buyer undertakes to enter only as a licensee, and to acknowledge that they won't take actual occupation until completion. They must also return the keys daily to the estate agent."

The estate agent may be entitled to additional compensation for the extra work involved in handling the keys and monitoring compliance with the early-access conditions. Mr Bliss says: "The purchaser also has to be responsible for utilities such as gas and electricity and where possible take over the insurance."

Such safeguards mean that early-access arrangements tend to end happily – ultimately. "On several occasions the buyer failed to complete on the actual completion date specified in the contract," Mr Bliss says. "Typically it turns out to be technical delays, but my client and his solicitor both get jittery. Even with so-called fast-track court proceedings, it can still take quite some time."

Jitters are justified. One estate agent knows of "several instances in which buyers have pulled houses to bits and then, for various reasons, been unable to complete". Joanna Haydon-Knowell, who owns J-H-K Estate Agents in Muswell Hill, north London, says: "Sometimes my gut reaction is to dis-

trust a buyer. I advise against early access."

One buyer benefiting from early access was Ms Haydon-Knowell herself, transforming a house that, requiring new bathroom, new kitchen, and new everything, also needed a new foundation because of subsidence.

Her vendor did himself no favours. "He insisted on a reinstatement clause but took no photographs to display the original state. His contract was nebulous."

Sellers sometimes foolishly cut corners, she warns. "It happens when a solicitor charges an additional £100 or £200 to compose the access clauses. To avoid the unexpected expense, some sellers naively rely on a verbal instead of a written agreement."

The saving is false and dangerous – and unnecessary. The extra cost could and should be absorbed by the buyer. And the emotional reassurance is worth

There are tales of
People rifling
through papers,
borrowing the
toothbrush, even
using the bed for
conjugal activities

the price in any event, advises Ms Haydon-Knowell, who was 1995 Estate Agent of the Year.

An informal version of early access occurs frequently. "We do it all the time," says a London estate agent, referring to the forbidden but widespread practice of casually lending keys to buyers whom they have come to know and trust. It should never be considered acceptable, even if the buyer only wants to measure up.

There are stories of buyers looking in wardrobes, rifling

through papers, cleaning their teeth with the occupier's toothbrush and even using the bed for conjugal activities.

Some vendors, having agreed to minor redecoration and refurbishment, return home to find paint stains on their clothing or new windows in every room. For some buyers, measuring up includes the actual laying of carpets or hanging of curtains. And if measuring up can be defined so broadly, it can easily include sanding floors, fiddling with central heating, or drilling holes in walls. Gouged floors, a flood or a fire can be the consequence. Even if the physical damage is entirely covered by insurance, the legal, administrative and emotional problems may be considerable.

Ms Haydon-Knowell recently handled a sale to a developer who, buying to let, persuaded the seller to release the keys for an unaccompanied visit for one day only. The buyer duly returned the key that same day but not after making a duplicate, and surreptitiously refurbishing the entire property throughout the rest of the week.

What if he went bankrupt and failed to complete both the purchase and the renovations? The value of a single-family house that had been turned into not-quite-finished flats might easily plummet. The deposit could prove to be far less than the cost of repairing the damage.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Mr Bliss "insists on at least the full 10 per cent deposit on exchange, and we try for 15 per cent if it seems feasible".

Sellers should also actively monitor their property, seeing who is doing what, and when they are doing it.

Maples Teesdale, 21 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3DU, 0171 831 6501; J-H-K, 338 Muswell Hill Broadway, London N10, 0181 833 5485.



On the safe side: many in the property business advise against letting buyers in early

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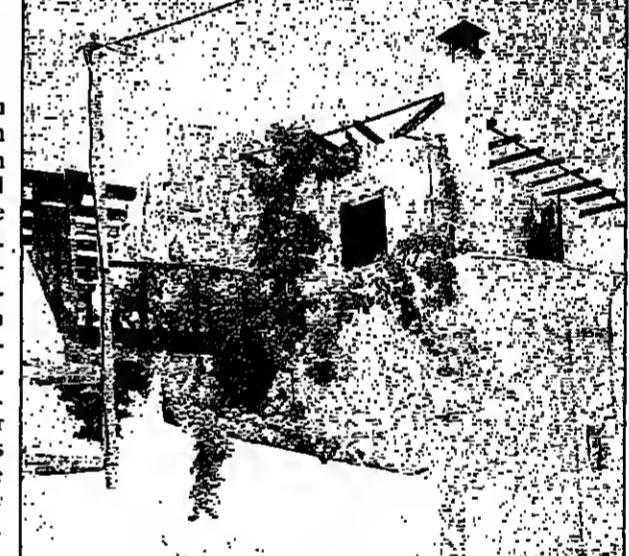
L'Aubade – "Dawn Chorus" – is the highest house above Franschhoek, in the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. In private woodland with two small vineyards, the Dutch-style house was built in 1986. There is a study, library, games room, swimming pool, five bedrooms and two cottages. The vineyard Price £875,000, through Knight Frank (0171 629 8171).



In Normandy, around £78,000 will buy a stone-built house and barn in quarter of an acre on the edge of a tiny village near Pré-en-Pail. Water and electricity are close. The barn and stable is one large room with a wood partition. There is a good slate roof, the aisle is floored and could make three or four bedrooms. Splendid isolation 100 33 2 43 03 09 21.



For £85,000 comes an old stone house in Kato Elounda, on Crete, in a village used as a location for the film Shirley Valentine. The renovated two-bedroom, two-bathroom house has a sitting room with fireplace, courtyard garden and roof terrace. Geraniums tangle over the front wall and it is a short walk to the beach. Crete Property Consultants (0171 3281829).



Very unBritish:
Las Isla near
Colunga on
Spain's Costa
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Tide changes for
overseas property

A decade ago, the number of UK agents specialising in foreign property was estimated to be more than 2,000. A few years – and a market collapse – later, that figure was down to a handful. Now the number is rising again, with sellers able to command good prices. Steve Emmett offers buyers tips on finding the right agent and the right property.

Quiet as the dawn, a new era has crept upon us. Acclimatised to hard times, developers and agents have been caught with their trousers firmly fastened around their ankles. There is now a realisation that, by and large, the glut of properties has gone; good property in sought-after locations is beginning to fetch a premium. Property which had been on the market since the early Nineties has now started to change hands. And what is more, while price inflation is not what it was 10 years ago, prices are again on the move.

To borrow an over-used phrase, the world is getting

smaller. Thirty years ago the British prime minister holidayed in the Scilly Isles; today it is the palm-fringed beaches of the Indian Ocean. For the masses, Benidorm and Fuengirola have replaced Brighton and Bognor, a kind of gentrification or, perhaps more accurately, a maturing of tastes across the board.

The result is a rich and diverse market-place, a far cry

from the early years of chartered plane loads of would-be buyers being shipped out to Malaga and Mahon every Saturday. In short, if you want to acquire a home abroad, be it for holidays, retirement or investment, there is a world to choose from.

Before commencing your search it is worthwhile making a few notes to guide you.

What is the purpose of the acquisition? If it is for a weekend retreat you are likely to reach a different conclusion than if you want something for six months a year. Similarly, if you are a winter-sports fanatic you can save yourself the inspection trips to Florida. Those may be over-simplifications but the principle applies generally.

Do you speak the language of your chosen country? If not, is it necessary to learn it and, perhaps more important, can you learn it? If you are on a tight budget, what is the cost of



owning and running a property? What is the cost of travel? If you are retiring, how does it affect your pension? Health care? The list is almost endless. Most national and international newspapers and magazines carry advertisements from agencies and developers with property to sell in the most popular countries and resorts. Take care. As with any trade, there are good and bad operators. Make sure that you are dealing

with someone who has experience and a track record. Ask to speak with past clients. Ideally, stick to agencies belonging to a recognised professional or trade body – and check that organisation out too. Time spent now in choosing the right agent will save you time, trouble and probably money in the long run.

The Federation of Overseas Property Developers, Agents and Consultants (Fopdac) is the UK's leading trade organisation

for those dealing with the sale and servicing of property outside the UK. Fopdac membership has recently increased and the range of countries offered by member firms is considerable. A list of members, as well as legal notes, are available on request. The National Association of Estate Agents (Naea) is more for UK domestic property, has an international section which continues to develop year on year. Again, details of

members dealing in overseas property can be obtained from their offices.

FIABCI (The International Real Estate Federation) is represented throughout the world by accredited professional bodies. In the UK it is the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (Rics). It is fair to say that Fopdac and Naea members are mostly involved with residential property while FIABCI has a commercial leaning.

Whatever your choice – studio flat or villa, cottage or castle; sun and sea or mountains and lakes – the early part of 1998 has to be a good time to buy, especially if you have funds in sterling. All forecasts are for a strengthening of European currencies as interest rate differentials narrow between the UK and its EU counterparts.

It is important to be cautious in such a venture; after all, a home abroad is more than

likely to be your single biggest investment after your home in the UK. Keeping things in perspective allows plenty of room for realising that the vast majority of people are happy with their purchases and get many years of enjoyment from them. Wherever your search takes you, have fun.

Fopdac 0181 941 5588; Naea 01926 496800; FIABCI 0171 222 7000



When the minimalist's loft space presents a minor problem



The grand scale: Grace Green and sisters like to spread themselves in the loft. Their parents have decided on more conventional living. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Acacia Avenue is out and the urban loft is in. People with children tend to choose the former's neat privets and net curtains but can minimalism be compatible with children? Ginetta Vedricka pressed the intercoms of some riverside conversions to find the families behind the stylish facades.

Nicola and Nigel Green live in 1,500 square feet of a converted Victorian canvas house near Tower Bridge in London. Originally used for storing flags and marqueses, it is now a modern "space" consisting mostly of one huge room with stripped floors, exposed brickwork and metal columns.

The ceiling beams still have signs for Wimbledon and Lords, reminding visitors of the building's original purpose. You

might be forgiven for thinking the Greens are smart single types in a designer setting but the bright plastic toys which Ms Green likens to "volcanic lava erupting" give away the apartment's other inhabitants: Grace, aged five, Florence, two, and Millie seven months.

Open-plan living had always been a dream for the Greens, design consultants, who moved from their Wimbledon Victorian terrace when Grace was born. Why choose such an unusual property for your family home? "Living here with one baby was fine and I was told I couldn't have any more," Ms Green says.

Three daughters later, is the aspirational canvas house child-friendly? "People walk in and say 'oh, it must be wonderful for children' and it is, but they do go a bit mad in this large space. It's hectic but I can watch them while I'm cooking," says Ms Green. She thought their home was unconventional until "a mum at Grace's school said she couldn't have a party because of their dangerous

metal staircases and I realised everyone in her class probably lives in a place like this".

The Greens, however, find their home is brilliant for children's parties: "We had the whole class, a children's entertainer and the parents in another corner with no problem." Are they purists when it comes to minimalism? "I am very ordered but there's more storage space than in a traditional loft," says Ms Green, who has given up trying to stem the flow of toys.

Living in a stylish space with children can lead to inventive adaptations which are not normally part of an architect's brief. "The columns are a bit dangerous but I've wrapped cushions around so they can't crash into them and I've tied the ladder in the library area with rope," Ms Green says. Are there particular aspects of life that are difficult? "It's hard getting in and out down the stairs with the baby and all our shopping is delivered - it's a bit

like living in the middle of the country."

Down-river from the Greens, in a converted factory, lives a photographer. After 20 years in the States he was attracted to loft style living for himself and his two children who helped design the shell:

"Their favourite place to roam was HMS Belfast where they liked to pretend they were pointing guns at the tourist boats."

This pastime resulted in the apartment's nautical theme: "There's a ship's ladder up to a galleried sleeping and play platform where you sit on deck. Adults can't stand up there and it's got portholes where the kids spy down to where I live and work - they love it."

When the architect had trouble fitting the ladders he was dispatched to HMS Belfast to "see how the Navy do it". The family loves the "avant garde" area but find the dearth of good schools a big disadvantage. "There's a lot of money round here but people are unwilling to put something back in to the community."

Mark Coulter, negotiator for Chestertons estate agency at Tower Bridge, says people tend to sell their warehouses when they have children. "It's like buying a sports car - fun when you're young but with kids you want something more practical."

Edmund and Rosalie Hall have no plans to move from their architect-designed space in Highbury, London, where they live with two-year-old Lola. After trying unsuccessfully to have children for 11 years they sold their "family home" and set about planning "a child-free pad".

"We took out all the walls and made one huge space with an open staircase in the middle," Mr Hall says. "When we found out Rosalie was pregnant it came right out of the blue but even then we didn't think about redesigning."

When Lola started crawling, the stairs became a problem. "We had the architect add stair rails which she wasn't happy about as she thinks the flat's too

cluttered." The Halls find lack of privacy the main disadvantage of open-plan living but are compromising by buying the flat below and turning it into bedrooms. They do not see themselves heading for suburbia. "The space here is fantastic for children," Mr Hall says.

For the Greens, though, despite all the attractions of their lifestyle, it is time to move on. Has the lure of Betjeman's "chintzy, chintzy cheeriness" enticed the Greens to sell their canvas house? "We are moving to a more traditional house where we can walk into a garden," says Mrs Green, who has mixed feelings about leaving.

The other families in their block have also moved. "People tend to be a bit more sensible when the children reach school age. I love being by the river, where there is always something going on. If it were just us, we would stay. But we are choosing a whole new way of life."

The canvas house is for sale through Chestertons (0171 357 7999).

How to break into home ownership without raiding the bank

How do you buy a home of your own when the only savings you have are the contents of your piggy bank? Felicity Connell goes in search of the best deals.

Despite the recent housing-market revival, the 100 per cent mortgage, a product of the lending frenzy in the late 1980s, is harder now to find. While they are still around, most lenders are unwilling to offer a loan for the full value of a home, lest they find themselves thousands of pounds out of pocket in the event of another house price collapse and defaults by borrowers.

If you have barely enough money to buy the furniture, should you be considering buying the house? Some would argue that given the length of council waiting lists, a shortage of private rental accommodation and the astronomical rents for property available, paying a mortgage, even with all the encumbrances, may seem preferable.

The most popular way to buy a home with very little initial expense is to buy new. The larger house-builders have enough financial security and freedom to offer substantial incentives to tempt buyers. If your piggy bank holds £99 you might just make it.

Barratt Homes started the scheme with a £250 deposit and move in" offer. That has just been reduced to £99, partly to encourage buyers during the winter months, traditional-

ly the quietest time in the housing market. Buyers put down a reservation fee of £99, move in, and then get up to 20 weeks to save for their deposit, in monthly amounts based on what the mortgage repayments will be.

After 20 weeks or when the deposit is paid, whichever is the sooner, buyers start making mortgage repayments. In certain developments the company will also pay half the deposit, matching monthly savings pounds found for pound.

This is a scheme particularly suited to those renting a property. "It helps break the Catch 22 situation of having enough monthly income to pay for a mortgage but watching it disappear in rent," says Dave Simpson, of Barratt Homes North.

That was the situation facing Angela and Jannick Charpentier. They now own a three-bedroom house in Beckton, east London, bought from Barratt for £97,000, with an initial deposit of £250. Within five months, with no rent or mortgage to pay, the deposit was raised, half from the Charpentiers, half from Barratt.

"It is hard to save for a deposit when you are paying rent, and if it hadn't been for this scheme we would have had to rent again," Mrs Charpentier says. "With help towards our legal and survey costs, in all, the package has saved us about £4,000."

Beazer Homes is another company offering such incentives on around 250 developments across the country, with the added bonus of no deposit to pay.



Home-lovin' gal: Angela Charpentier and husband put down only £250

A first-time buyer can buy a house for an initial £99, the company pays the 5 per cent deposit and the buyer then takes on a 95 per cent mortgage. The deposit is only paid back if the buyer cancels the deal. In certain developments, the company will also pay £500 towards legal fees, which should easily

cover straightforward conveyancing.

At its Waterside development near Rugby, Beazer is offering a choice of 5 per cent deposit paid or free curtains and carpets. No contest. Raid the local jumble sales for the curtains and buy a pair of slippers to keep your feet warm on the

floorboards and move in.

Both companies stress that these deals are not a case of giving with one hand and taking away with another. Mortgages are arranged through the main high street lenders at standard interest rates.

The downside of buying through any scheme in a new

development, be it part-exchange, cashbacks, deposit delayed or waived entirely, has always been that there is no bargaining power. The full asking price must be paid.

But in the current climate of

gazumping and properties being snapped up even before construction, these deals are

acceptable, as long as an independent valuation agrees with the purchase price.

If you have neither the money for a deposit, nor sufficient income to obtain a mortgage for the full purchase price, a rent/buy scheme may be an option.

Do-it-yourself-shared

ownership (Dyso) is operated

by housing associations, and is

exactly as it sounds.

The buyer finds a property, arranges a mortgage for his share, with the housing association putting up the rest. The buyer's share can be between 25 per cent and 75 per cent with rent paid to the housing association on the remainder. Gradually, further shares can be bought until the property is owned outright.

The advantage of this scheme is that buyers are not confined to new housing estates. As long as the property is considered manageable, fit for intermediate occupation and structurally sound, any residential property on the open market and within a certain price band can theoretically be purchased. And a habitable home does not mean a new kitchen, fitted carpets and central heating - the basic amenities will do.

Joe and Linda Griffin and their two teenage children left their run-down council estate for a three-bedroom house of their choice in a desirable area of Enfield, north London. The family approached Metropolitan Housing Association, and Mr Griffin, a self-employed plasterer, says: "We were told we could pay half mortgage/half rent for any house we wanted

to buy from the open market so long as it was within our limit of £71,000. It was amazing that it was all so easy to understand and we were impressed with how affordable it was. We were out looking for a house straight away."

Priority is given to council tenants and those on the waiting lists for both council and housing associations, as the

"It was amazing that it was all so easy to understand and we were impressed with how affordable it was"

remainder of the purchase price is met by local government funding.

Applicants must be able to cover legal and survey fees but have no need to raise a deposit. They simply need to show that they can sustain monthly payments. Rent levels on non-owned share are strictly controlled, but there is no other safety net in sharing property with a housing association. Once you step on the housing ladder, you are subject to all the pitfalls - mortgage rises, repossession - that a company like the delights of home ownership.

Dyso information from Housing Corporation, 0171 2000000.

Japanes...
Japanese Prime Minister yesterday offered an apology for the treatment of British prisoners during the Second World War, a move hailed by Tony Blair as "a very significant step". But despite all the rhetoric, the country contained many new Richard L...
reports from